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after this war.

by **GORDON
KEYNE**



WHO'S WHO *in this* ISSUE

Allan Swinton

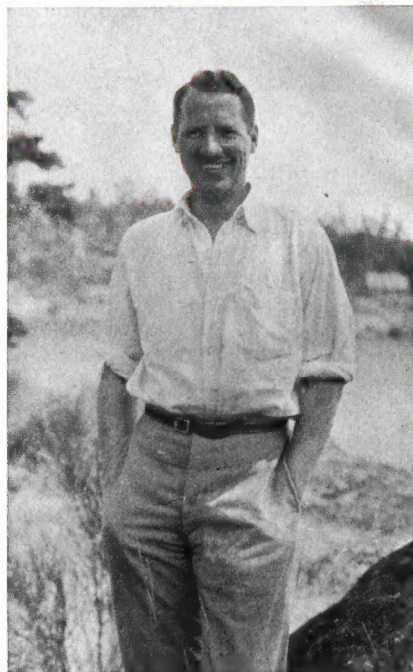
BORN and educated in England. Went from University to India and traveled extensively in Far East. Short time as tea-planter. As an officer of Indian Army of Officers, was called to colours in '14, served six months on N.W. Frontier with Bengal Lancers, later sent to France. Transferred to Field Artillery in '15 and served till June '19. Wounded seven times. Decorated by French and British.

Went to Canada in '20 after being told by doctors that I was an invalid. In two years, spent in the woods at odd jobs, was as good as ever. Continued said odd jobs in the bush till '25, when I married a lady of Loyalist stock and started writing.

Had a burst of great success which has not been repeated; sagged into a moderate seller and have remained so. Wife died in '33, when I returned to England, where I have been ever since.

In '39 married a Spanish lady. Before and since outbreak of War have been passed A-1 for active service by the Army three times, R.A.F. twice and Navy once—but thrown out neck and crop, once they had seen my medical record of the last war in the files.

Now living in rural Sussex, O.C. of Home Guard unit, which are being trained as guerrilla fighters and are shaping rather well.



Allan Swinton

William Byron Mowery

BILL MOWERY'S idea of perfect happiness is to hang a forty-pound automobile battery by a strap over his shoulder, hook a spot-light to it, and thus equipped, to wander around the woods all night hunting rare moths and other shy wild things that most of us never see. Or to spend two weeks tracking down a particular variety of warbler to prove that it is (or isn't) a separate variety but a hybrid. A recent letter contained one sentence about a story and two paragraphs about an albino chipmunk he'd discovered. In sum, a nut naturalist—and in consequence, a writer who knows his backgrounds as few others do.

He was born in Ohio, put himself through college out of his earnings as a trapper in Canada; and has been on the faculties of the University of Texas and the University of Illinois. During World War I he served as a machine-gun instructor and with the Tank Corps. A few years ago his old craving for the wilds returned, and he bought him an airplane with which in nineteen days he covered wilderness territory in Canada that in his youth would have taken him a year to cover. The high-light of that trip was a herd of musk oxen so unused to man and so unafraid that he had to throw a rock at them to get action for a movie.

Among his best known novels are "Heart of the North," "The Sword of Manitou" and "Resurrection River."



William Byron Mowery

READERS' FORUM

TURN TO PAGE 10

A bookstall or a magazine rack is to me what a pastry-shop window is to a hungry little boy. But this winter the nigh-impossible happened. I became surfeited with all reading matter—fed up! Maybe it was the times. December, 1941, carried a punch that could make any reflection of life seem pale and puny.

One day a BLUE BOOK cover with its "for Men, by Men" took my eye. Maybe this was the tonic I had been looking for.

It was a treat to find stories that had in them the red meat of loving, hating, fearing, striving, rather than the muck of perverted morals or "dehydrated" young love.

The type of story I would like to see is a story dealing with the post-war world, its problems and their possible adjustments. I believe that while we are bending every effort to win the war, we should be giving some thought to the time to come. And you have two or three writers who could do a bang-up job along these lines. The Sword's a flop—give the Pen a whirl.

E. B. Gleason,
Wappinger's Falls, N. Y.

THE WORSE, THE BETTER!

It has been my observation that an interesting paradox exists concerning our popular magazines: the worse condition, the better magazine.

By that I mean that from all the magazines that we have in our camp day-rooms and service clubs, I can ordinarily select at a glance the soldiers' favorites, since the covers and pages have had the most wear.

Rest assured that BLUE BOOK has that well-thumbed, well-read look! I see them at all the Army recreation centers and there are always a few copies around the barracks.

Let the BLUE BOOK keep on serving the Army as well as the Army is serving our country!

Corporal E. D. Roberts,
Aberdeen Proving Grounds,
Maryland.

TOO MANY WAR STORIES?

I had just finished a letter destined for you when the new issue of BLUE BOOK arrived. The criticism I had to offer was in regard to the number of war stories you have been using in your late issues. While I believe that a certain amount of this type of story furnishes good entertainment, so also do I believe that too many defeat this purpose. Other readers of BLUE

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Except for stories of Real Experiences, all stories and novels printed herein are fiction and are intended as such. They do not refer to real characters or to actual events. If the name of any living person is used, it is a coincidence.



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Published monthly at McCall St., Dayton, Ohio. Subscription Offices—Dayton, Ohio. Editorial and Executive Offices—220 Park Ave., New York, N. Y. THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE, January, 1943, VOL. LXXVI, No. 3. Copyright, 1942, by McCall Corporation. All rights reserved in the United States, Great Britain and in all countries participating in the Pan American Copyright Convention and the International Copyright Union. Reprinting not permitted except by special authorization. Subscription Prices, one year \$2.50, two years \$4.00. Extra in Canada, 50 cents per year; foreign, \$1.00 per year. For change of address give us four weeks' notice and send old address as well as new. Special Notice to Writers and Artists: Manuscripts and art material submitted for publication in the Blue Book Magazine will be received only on the understanding that the publisher and editors shall not be responsible for loss or injury thereto while such manuscripts or art material are in the publisher's possession or in transit.

Entered as second-class matter, November 12, 1930, at the Post Office at Dayton, Ohio, under the Act of March 3, 1879

Printed in U.S.A.



JOHNNY JONES *and*

THINGS happen suddenly; that's what people say. But when you come to think of it, it isn't half the truth.

It's really only culminating action that comes striking all at once. Like the great ninth sea in a heavy gale—rolling halfway round the world before it bursts. Like the war. Or like what happened to Johnny Jones, a trollboat man from Burnville under the shoulder of Tillamook Head on the Clatsop County coast.

It seemed to him to be a very sudden thing, and in a way, of course, it was. Because the first he knew about her was her low strange voice. It was so

The able author of "Gunfire off Makapuu" and "The Iron Whirlwind" gives us an unforgettable drama of the North Pacific today.

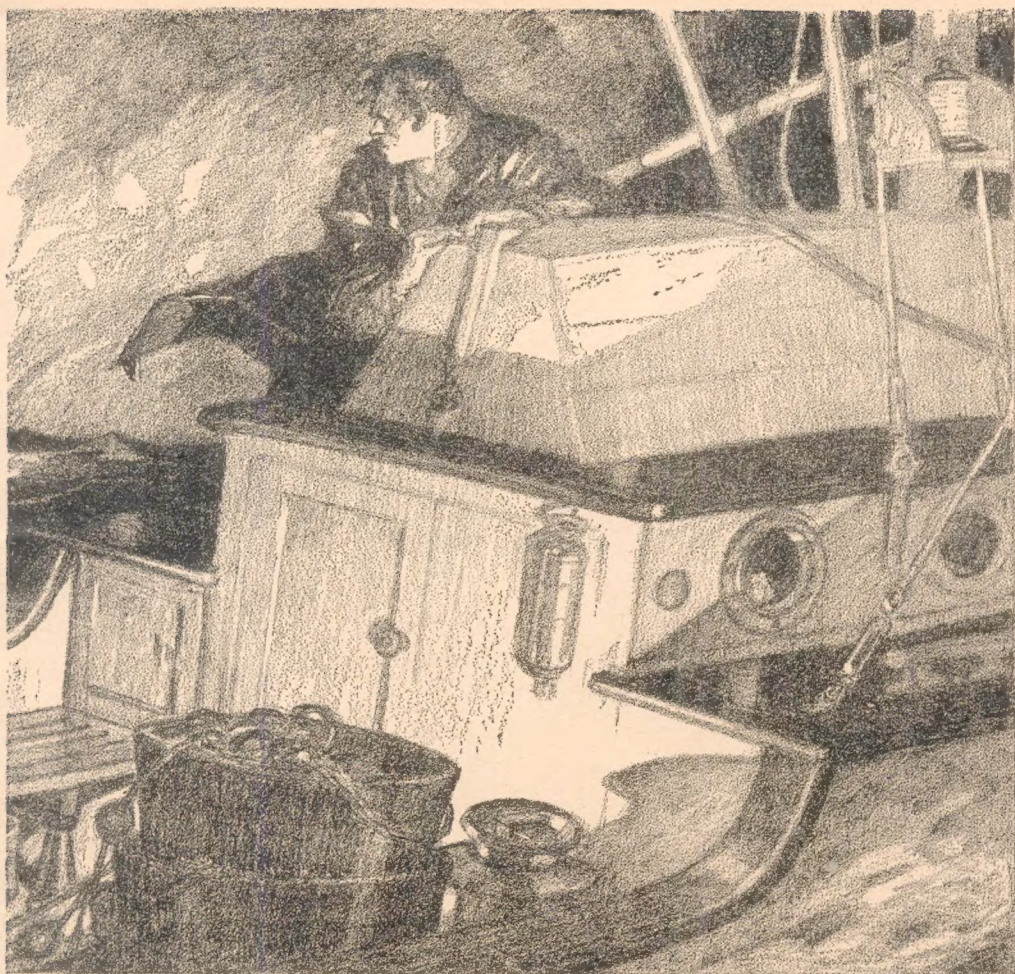
delicate and feminine—so odd a voice to hear in Oregon in sight of the brawling sea. And it came from behind his back, from the other side of the old stone well in the village square where Johnny was overhauling steelhead gear.

"Excuse, Mynheer," it tinkled with a wistful sort of eagerness, "but is it here Gran'père Lebec bakes bread?"

Johnny didn't straighten up at once to a question as startling as that. He kept bending over his mess of trolls

a moment more, wary of the fun some fellows were always gleefully fishing up to plague at a man as little as Johnny Jones. Especially George and Sam. But then he remembered he had left them down by the trollboat wharf, and he knew this voice was real. So he drew himself erect—and there she was.

She was wearing a pale blue skirt that hugged her hips in a very provoking way, and a tight-fitting sweater cut low in the neck that clung to her



the WISHING WELL

by *Jacland Marmur*

shapeliness. In one small hand she held a dark beret because the autumn was so warm, and in the other a battered suitcase made of straw. She looked fragile at first. Like her voice. But even Johnny Jones, who knew much more about pilchard and steel-head boats than he ever would about girls, understood right away how deceiving that impression was. She was small, but she stood so straight in the dusty road, her round face glowing in the late December sun. It made

her tumbled hair look yellow, shot through with tawny streaks; it made her pert nose wrinkle up deliciously, having to look at him against the light. She did, though. She looked at him with a serious stare, wiser than a woman's, more trusting than a child's. No wonder Johnny stared.

And while he did, very suddenly she looked aloft, a startling movement of her head to search the pink and violet sky. Then, looking down, "François, would be his name," she

urged, her clear contralto making Johnny remember how a summer wind could sigh in a smallboat's gear when the sea is smooth and the weather fine. "A tall man with a white mustache. He walks with a heavy limp. From Verdun, I think. And they say he—"

"Well, as far as that goes," Johnny grinned, "the world is full of men who limp."

"Oh!" Her red lips trembled with fatigue and disappointment. "Oh," she said, again.

"Sure. Right here in Burnville too. There's Sammy's Pa. Since Belleau Wood. And old George Burns. My

grandfather too, when you think of it, though his goes back to '98. They all of them limp. But they none of them got no white mustache." Johnny's grin got broader now. "So I guess you must mean Frank Lebec. Only—"

"But yes!" Her eyes leaped wide. "Lebec! Gran'père Lebec. Is it—"

"That's his shop just across from Ike Bulchey's store. Over there. But he don't do no bakin' except in summer for the fancy Seaside trade. So if you come lookin' for some of Frank Lebec's French bread, you—"

"No. Oh, no. I am looking for more than bread." Again she made that swift movement of her head so her eyes could search the sky. "I have come to live with him. I have come from very far, Mynheer."

"Johnny's the name. Johnny. Not Mynheer. . . . By golly, I guess you must be a refugee."

"I guess I must. I am Brènida. Brènida van Maak. I hope you will be my friend, John-ee."

"Sure." Johnny grinned again at the way she pronounced his name, as if it were made of two syllables, a heavy accent on the last. "Sure, Brènida," he said. "Why not?"

"They call me Brèni for short; won't you? I used to live in a fishing village almost as lovely as this. We called it Neudenkirke." And she added slowly: "It was not far from Rotterdam."

"Rotterdam! Why, that's in Europe some place! Now don't start telling me you walked all the way from there to find old Frank Lebec."

"Oh, no. Only from Astoria. It is very much too big."

"Big?" Astoria? Why, that—"

"I mean America. It took almost a week in a fine gray bus. I kept looking all the time."

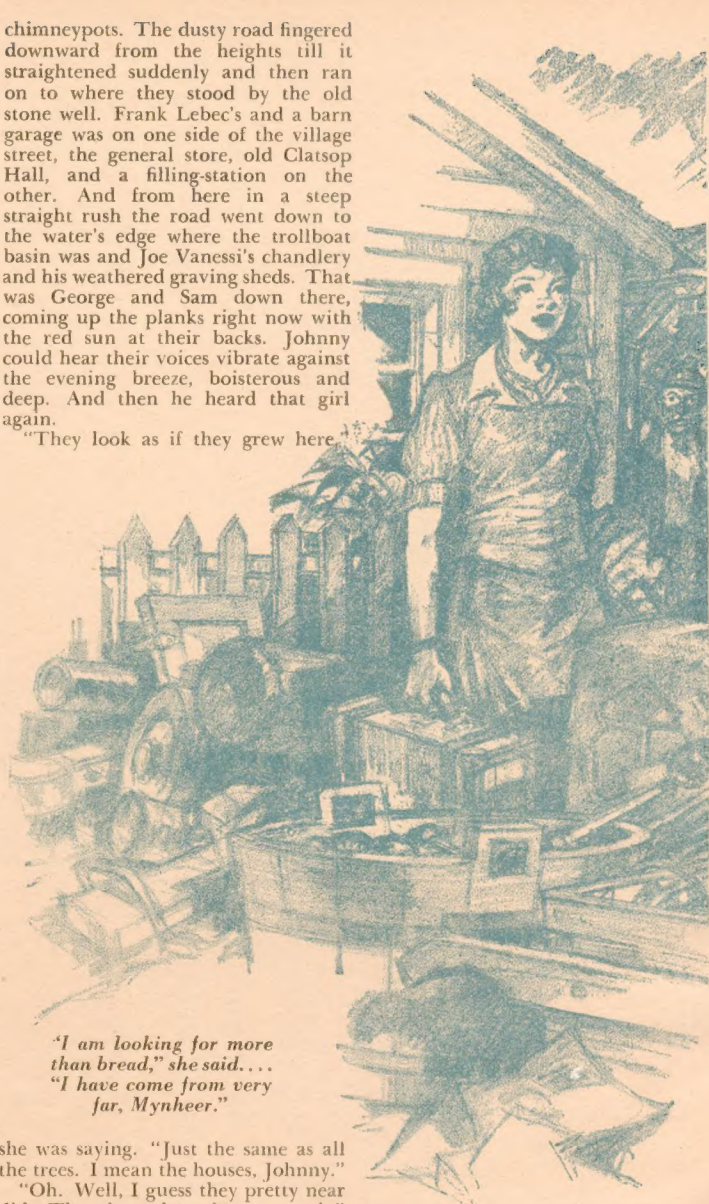
"I bet! Did you find what you were looking for?"

"I hope I will find it here. It is such a lovely place." She set down her battered suitcase with its one worn leather strap. Then, because she felt such great relief, she spun on her heel, slapping her thigh with her dark beret while she drank in the look of the countryside. "Lovely!" she cried. "Oh, I am so glad."

But Johnny frowned. Because what was so wonderful about a place like this to make a girl with a troubling voice and yellow hair look as if she meant to sing? That's what Johnny wondered, having known it all his life, this remnant of pioneer Oregon left high and dry by the march of many years. The sloping hills, green with pine and Douglas fir, were burning in the sunset light. The valley was like a funnel leading to the sea, spotted with ancestral homesteads, the houses rooted to the land with stone and heavy timber, the plowed land between, and blue smoke at all the

chimneypots. The dusty road fingered downward from the heights till it straightened suddenly and then ran on to where they stood by the old stone well. Frank Lebec's and a barn garage was on one side of the village street, the general store, old Clatsop Hall, and a filling-station on the other. And from here in a steep straight rush the road went down to the water's edge where the trollboat basin was and Joe Vanessi's chandlery and his weathered graving sheds. That was George and Sam down there, coming up the planks right now with the red sun at their backs. Johnny could hear their voices vibrate against the evening breeze, boisterous and deep. And then he heard that girl again.

"They look as if they grew here."



*"I am looking for more than bread," she said. . . .
"I have come from very far, Mynheer."*

she was saying. "Just the same as all the trees. I mean the houses, Johnny."

"Oh. Well, I guess they pretty near did. They been here long enough." He tossed up his arm, carelessly pointing the distance out. "See that place by Washburn Creek? Georgie Burns lives there. And over there, that's Sammy Brown's." His finger arced the long valley slowly to indicate an old stone homestead with a roof of heavy shakes, purple in a haze of curling chimney smoke—an old man in a field beyond, limping behind a plow as he turned black earth for winter wheat in sight of the open sea. "That's us. That place belongs to Johnny Jones. Then there's—" Johnny broke off at the sound of her

tinkling laughter. "Why, what's the matter?" he wanted to know.

"It's such a funny way to say who lives in a house. Like there wasn't a family at all. Just Georgie Burns," she mimicked, "Sammy Brown and—"

"Well, what's funny about it?" Johnny flared.

Instantly, the laughter went from Brèni's voice. She was afraid he was angry; it seemed to her to be a most alarming thing. That's why Johnny never really understood how she got to be standing in front of him. Because all he saw was the swift grace



of her frightened movement and how her fine legs flashed. The next he knew she was looking at him from very close with her sea-blue eyes, and saying eagerly: "You mean your father's name is Johnny Jones? Just the same as—"

"My father got killed in the war. The last war. At Chateau Thierry."

"Oh," she said, looking quickly up at the sky and then down again. "Oh."

"But that was his name. Yes. And it's mine. And it's Grandpa's too. So if you—"

"Oh, that's fine! Really, Johnny, I think that's fine. There's always been a Johnny Jones in your house, a Georgie Burns in his, and a Sammy Brown in his. Always. That's why you say it like that. That's what you mean! Isn't it?"

"Well," Johnny frowned, "I never thought about it just like that. But it's true enough, I guess."

"Well, I think it's very fine," said Brèni, serious and calm. "It's almost like saying Johnny Jones is—well—immortal. Isn't it? You ought to be very proud. I hope I can be useful enough in this place to call it home. It looks a little like my home," she added wistfully. "Especially the fishing boats. I used to help with the fishing since I was a little girl. Whenever the North Sea devils slept. And we had a well in Neudenkirke too. Almost like this one here. It—"

"Shucks! No one uses that no more. I guess it's half filled up by now."

"No one used ours, either. The sea came up in it and the water turned out salt. But we called it the Neudenkirke wishing well. A woman was

supposed to drop a penny down before she made her wish. I asked my father about it. He told me if a girl was young enough and—believed enough, her wish was certain to come true." Brèni's frown made her nose all crinkle up. "But I never thought to ask him how it would all turn out if the well got bombed away. Maybe, Johnny, maybe I could find out here. If you won't be angry with me."

Her eyes were still on his. For some reason, that bothered him a lot. So Johnny frowned severely. Then he coughed. And finally he flashed his white-toothed grin. "Sure, Brèni, sure. Okay. Now you better get along to Frank Lebec's so he'll know you got here safe. That's George and Sam coming up the road and they're bound to make some funny cracks. Don't you pay no attention at all. I'm used to them. You let me handle it."

So she did exactly what he said. She just smiled at him before she picked up her old straw suitcase, and he watched the stirring rhythm of her walk as she crossed the road toward Frank Lebec's, the sunset light like a halo on her small proud head. And that's the way it started between Brèni and Johnny Jones.

Maybe it was because they were both a little on the smallish side. Compared to fellows like George and Sam, at any rate, who both stood pretty near six feet. Or maybe it was the way those two got to ragging him. But whenever Johnny saw her looking at him or heard her tantalizing voice, he didn't know whether he ought to grin or make believe he was mad clean through. Because she caused him plenty of trouble, and George and Sam had lots of fun. Like Saturday night at Clatsop Hall, when she wouldn't dance with anyone till Johnny came along and right in front of everybody she asked him if it was all right. And then she started meeting him down at Joe Vanessi's wharf when he brought his trollboat in. Because the southeast weather started, raw and cold, and she said he ought to have hot coffee to warm him up on nights like that, coming home from sea. Well, the coffee was good; no doubt of it. But Joe passed the word along to George and he passed it on to Sam—till pretty soon every steelhead cracker in the fleet was laughing fit to bust. And what the devil could Johnny do? He tried to tell her how a fellow didn't like being laughed at all the time, how it bothered his dignity. But the way she looked at him, her wide eyes so serious with bewildered pain, he didn't have the heart to go on. So he said no more about it, and he bore his trouble the best he could. After all, he told himself, Sammy and George had been having their sport with him for as long as he could remember. He was

used to all their tricks. But not the one they turned that early January dawn. Johnny found out about it just before the daylight broke.

He was in the cockpit of the trollboat Johnny J. with the tiller bar against his thigh, clear of Joe Vanessi's winking jetty light and heading west southwest to clear False Tillamook. The dark sea was lumping up, bursts of spray spattering his oilskins now and then. But Johnny was feeling fine, first boat out and a hunch in his head he might run onto a school of blueback off the mouth of Nehalem. So he gave instinctive balance to the jumpy motion of the boat, swinging with her easy as she lifted over the

bit. He frowned heavily, pressing against the tiller bar to ease the Johnny J. over a big ninth sea with a white crest glinting in the first gray thinning of the night. And that's when he heard her clear voice.

"John-ee," it said with that exotic accent that was like a slow caress. He

suddenly limp and heartbroken. Thin dawn was just beginning to show the ocean's face, the gray-green running hills, the flanks and hollows flecked with white, the hull of a northbound coastwise tanker black against the western board. And the trollboat Johnny J., dipping and rolling in the wine-dark swells. "I just want to be useful, Johnny," she murmured sadly. "So when they said you—"

"Yeah! Sure! Didn't I tell you not to believe what fellahs like George and Sammy said? Didn't I say—"

"Oh, but I must." Her voice was quiet, yet it sounded clearly above the wind. "If I can't believe what I hear in America is true, then there's nothing true anywhere at all anymore. And they told me you—"

"Aw, never mind. Them fellahs is liable to tell you anything to get a laugh on me." It bothered him a lot to see her sitting there with her fair head bowed. That's why he sounded fierce. "Stop crying, will you!"

"I'm not crying." She stood up swiftly, and her tone was stinging sharp. "I'll take the skiff. I'll go back alone. You don't need to worry. I am very good with boats."



Illustrated by
Raymond Sisley

swells, rocking under a starry sky strung with long gray beards of scud. Johnny even got to humming, his cheek against the cold raw wind, thinking of Brèni and the funny things she did and said.

It seemed to him the people of Burnville were laughing more than they used to, even in spite of the war. Ever since Brèni came. Especially Saturday nights at Clatsop Hall where she showed them how the Dutch folk dances went. You couldn't forget her tossing yellow hair, the eager joy in her bright blue eyes, her skirts all swinging wide as she whirled around on her shapely legs with old Frank Lebec doing all he could to keep up with her in spite of the way he limped. Then she'd come running over to wherever Johnny stood and everyone would start to laugh some more.

All of a sudden, remembering that, Johnny didn't feel so fine. Laughing? You just bet they were! They were having a gay old time at his expense. And he didn't like it a little

didn't believe it at all at first; he thought he was hearing the wind in the troll-pole gear. But it came again from forward, calling: "John-ee!"

Then he saw her. She came wriggling out from under the pilchard nets wearing a yellow sou'wester and an Old Country reefer coat. All he could do was stare while she came sure-footedly aft, hanging to the cabin jackstay till she dropped into the cockpit where he stood, saying as bright and merry as you please, "Well, here I am."

Johnny's mouth opened. Then it closed. Till he managed at last to blurt, "Now how in blazes did you—"

"Oh, it was easy. I just hid under the nets while Joe Vanessi was still asleep. George and Sam told me—"

"George and Sam!" Johnny groaned. He almost let the boat broach to. George and Sam! He might have known it. Poor Johnny could hear all Burnville roaring with laughter right now at a salmon and steelhead man who took a girl to the trolling shoals. He'd never live that down! "My God," said Johnny bitterly, "aint you caused me trouble enough?"

"Trouble?" Brèni sat down abruptly on the cockpit coaming, looking

*"That's the way
his father went."
Ma Jones stood
motionless. "It
was just like this.
... twenty-five
years ago."*

"You'll do no such a bloomin' thing!"

"I will!"

"Be darned if you will!"

Like that, they faced each other, both of them outlined against a paling sky. What might have happened between them it's difficult to know, because Brèni's small round face was looking stubborn, and Johnny was pretty mad. But just then the boat tipped against a humpbacked sea, slapping them with spray. And from across an ocean space, sudden and violent, a rending explosion blasted against the dawn. Johnny's head snapped up; Brèni spun around. They were in time to see an enormous mushroom of smoke belch blackly from that tanker amidships, and from the heart of it an awful pillar of red flame leaping straight aloft. In an

instant Brèni's eyes shot skyward, full of terror.

"What you lookin' up there for? She—"

"That's where they come from, Johnny. Always! That's where—"

"She's been torpedoed! Jap submarine! My God," cried Johnny, "see her burn!"

Almost at once the ship was a roaring inferno against the horizon line, her superstructure a sheet of livid flame central in billowing clouds of smoke. Then her cargo of oil and high-test, spilling from her wounds, caught sparks close against her water line. Tongues of blue and yellow spread around her, licking swiftly outward like a wild fire crawling across dry grass. The blazing circle grew while they watched in horror, grew until the vessel floated in the middle of a vast pool of burning sea, rolling deeply, sending up jets and showers of sparks.

FAR to leeward, low on dark water, the ocean broke apart; a black, ugly thing drooled foam as it surfaced. They manned their deck-piece over there, leisurely hurling shells into the helpless ship. Brèni saw the crimson stabs, heard the savage thunder, saw the bursts of the explosions in the tanker's upper works and her boats disintegrate to splinters in their davits. Only then, content at last with so brave a morning's work, did the sub start to dive in the pool of its own spittle. Brèni shook her fists at it; her voice was shrill with rage.

"You fools!" she screamed at the monstrous thing before it disappeared. "You think you can beat little people down like that? You think you can make us do what you want? You can't! You never have! You never will! Never! . . . Never!"

She kept on crying that single word. Johnny was kicking the throttle wide and jamming his helm hard over. His face was grim as he watched the stricken tanker, blazing in a sea of fire. He could hear the fierce crackling roar of her burning, growing dreadful as he drove the Johnny J. that way. Through bursting sprays he could see her men in vivid silhouette against a red heart of fire, stumbling and staggering aft, manhandling a raft toward the poop, the only place in all her length still free of flame. And he heard Brèni's voice again.

"They'll burn, Johnny! The sea's on fire all around! They can't swim through it! And they mustn't launch their wooden raft! It'll burn them all to death before they scull it through the burning oil. We got to get alongside and—"

"Can't," said Johnny shortly. "We could maybe get in; we'd never get out. The trollboat's made of wood too."

"But we can't just watch them—"

"Take the tiller, Brèni. Let her come in close as you can. Keep to windward. We got to hook a line to their life-raft. Then maybe we can tow them clear quick enough and—"

"You can't throw a line far enough to—"

"I aint gonna try." Johnny kicked his seaboots off. He was tearing at his oilskins as he rapped instructions out. "This here's the clutch. That's the engine throttle there." He ripped the cover off a brand-new tub of line, swiftly making the end of it fast under his armpits, across his chest. "Pay it out fast, Brèni. Gimme lots of slack. Keep the bight under water so it won't burn through when—"

"No, Johnny! You can't swim through it! You can't. I won't let you! I—"

"Stop it! I'll send you over a wire. Make it fast to the stern bitts here. We'll hook the other end to the raft. When we get it launched over there and the men aboard, take the slack up quick. Then open the throttle wide and haul us clear. As fast as the Johnny J. will tow. Make for Joe Vanessi's, Brèni. You'll have a following sea and—"

"No!" She seized his arm, tugging at it fiercely. "You'll burn, Johnny!"

He shook her off, leaping to the deckhouse roof where the skiff was lashed. Here he swayed erect, flailing his arms in desperate signals. The tanker roared with flame under a pall of smoke across a wide space of sea licked by fantastic tongues of blue and orange fire. Dark specks showed against her taffrail. One of these seemed to wave reply; others still kept up their struggle with the raft, like shapes of the damned laboring in a nightmare's pit of hell. Johnny dropped to his knees. He slashed the lashings from the skiff. Waiting till the Johnny J. swung down, he let the smallboat take the water across the deckhouse skids. Then he leaped instantly after it into the sea.

The water was icy. It closed on him like a sheath of steel. For a moment all he could do was hang there, gasping, one fist on the sternpost of the skiff, staring back and up at Brèni, who had the trollboat's tiller bar against her thigh. She was looking at him. She knew his purpose now. Her lips were parted, but the wind and the sea drowned out her cry. And Johnny thrust strongly away from the trollboat's side.

Shoving the light skiff through the water in front of him, he gave all his strength to the powerful kicking beat of his legs. Grimly he kept on downwind, churning the water to froth behind him, keeping the skiff forging ahead to afford him a dangerous channel through a sea of licking fire. And Brèni watched him.

She watched him in such a concentration of will that nothing else had reality. Nothing but that man out there, fast to a line upon which all hope and life depended. It was in her care and she tended it, paying the slack out, holding the trollboat as close as she dared to the rim of flaming oil. The skiff went from her, growing smaller. The narrow channel it left astern vanished almost instantly as tongues of fire licked back to wipe away the mark of its passage. She couldn't see Johnny any more. Just the skiff, its bows already burning as it moved, a receding speck of black through a sea of flame toward where the tanker blazed with a fierce wild roar. Then the skiff itself disappeared. There was nothing left now. Nothing in all the world but flame. Flame and the blistering furnace heat. What could live in it? What could live when madmen set the torch to earth and all its oceans? Then suddenly the line went all askew.

For throat-catching moments Brèni watched a dark shape clamber painfully up from a fiery sea to a fiery deck. She must have hauled the line in. She must have secured the wire rope it sent her to the trollboat's bitts. She didn't remember that. All she remembered was a life-raft, distantly launched on flaming water. Seamen were one it—unarmed men of the merchant fleet: the survivors; the burned; the wounded. And Johnny Jones. She opened the throttle wide. She put over the helm. And she pointed the trollboat's bows toward Joe Vanessi's wharf, swiftly towing the charred raft and the men away from the flame and the death.

THAT'S how they came back that cold gray dawn, Brèni and Johnny Jones. That's how they came back from George and Sammy's joke. Only nobody laughed. They just tended the outraged men, murmuring grimly on the jetty over mercy's work, the people of a place called Burnville on the Clatsop County coast. Till in a sheet of flame the tanker exploded far at sea, and those of her men who could saw her burst in two before she settled quickly under the running ocean hills. The fire-tongues kept licking for a little while out there, and then at last expired.

"They murdered nine men," said Johnny Jones in a voice that was slow and flat and hard.

"They got no human right," George growled, "to be doing things like that."

"I was thinkin' the same," said Sammy Brown.

Johnny was getting it straight with himself. That's why he looked like he hadn't heard. He didn't move his head at all. He only frowned. "Do you figger you could manage, Ma?" he

asked from the edge of Joe Vanessi's wharf.

Ma Jones was on her knees beside a propped-up man, ointment and bandage in her hands. She looked up for an instant. The early light just touched her bony cheek, and silvered the gray at her temples. It made her country face look quietly austere. "I been expectin' that," she said, "for some time now." She knew what Johnny meant. "Yes; we will manage, Grandpa and me." And she added, firmly, "The Joneses always have managed."

SO Johnny decided he had to go, thinking it was a sudden thing. But Ma wasn't surprised, having seen it before. That's why when Brèni looked for him, she suddenly found he wasn't there. Fear reached her, cold and trembling. She thought he was angry with her. She thought he had lost him forever because of the trouble she made. But it wasn't really so. And the rest of it happened by the old stone well, right where it all began.

Johnny had a weathered seabag slung across his back; Georgie Burns a battered suitcase; Sammy just an old black bag. On their way up the pike to catch the Seaside bus. On their way to see had the Navy got any use for trollboat men. They were walking away from the village square, away from the well where the people stood, quietly seeing them off; two tall lean men made of muscle and bone, with little Johnny Jones marching in between. The mists were hanging on the wooded hills; the valley was purple with chimney smoke; the talk of the sea was loud and strong when Brèni came racing up.

She stopped short for a moment there, the bewildered pain blinding her because he never even said good-by. Still, she could see him clearly, him and no one else. And she heard the talk around her, the still slow Clatsop County talk. It filtered through to her consciousness. It touched her in some secret place that was eager and ready to understand.

"That's the way his father went." Ma Jones stood motionless. She was staring after him, a tall gaunt woman with narrow eyes in a furrowed earthy face. "It was just like this. It was twenty-five years ago. It was just like this. I remember it plain as day."

"That's my seabag he's got on his shoulder, Ma. The one I had with Dewey. With Admiral Dewey at Manila Bay!" Grandpa Jones said that loudly, in a proud clear voice. "I should 'a' give him my father's lucky ring. By Gawd! I wish I had. The one he wore at Appomattox an' a place called Gettysburg."

It was Johnny they were talking about! Brèni knew. They were talk-

ing about Johnny, marching off to war. All of those men were named Johnny Jones. Johnny at Chateau Thierry; Johnny at Manila Bay; Johnny at Appomattox and a place called Gettysburg. Maybe there was a Johnny Jones who starved and froze at Valley Forge. Whenever those top-hat fellows who ruled the earth got it tangled up in another mess, it was Johnny Jones who went to war to see could he put it to rights again. Whenever the rats came out of hiding, whenever the world got savage and all snarled up, if Johnny Jones didn't put it straight who was there left who could? Johnny and George and Sam. It began to sing in Brèni's heart; and all of a sudden she started to run as fast as her legs would go.

"John-ee!" she cried, shrill and clear. She went racing after him, unashamed, looking very small with her yellow hair in the southeast wind. She stumbled and fell and picked herself up, running on while she wildly cried again, "John-ee!"

He stopped and turned. He came back a pace in the road. He left George and Sam behind. She came rushing up to him, a tumult in her fine deep breasts. "I didn't want to make trouble for you. I didn't want to make people laugh. I'm sorry if I did. And I just want you to know it, Johnny, before you go away from me." Her little fists were clenched at her sides while it all came tumbling and gushing out before he could say a word. "I love you like a hot deep hurt. I can't help it, Johnny, and I wouldn't if I could. I wouldn't never have gone in the boat if it wasn't what George and Sammy said. They told me you were bashful and wanted to talk to me. They said if I hid in the boat you would. I believed them, Johnny. I wanted to. I got to believe what I hear over here. And I'm not sorry!" she cried. "Not even a little bit. Not even if they'll laugh some more. Not even if I am a refugee. Not even if they lied and you—"

"That's just it. They didn't lie. I didn't know it, Brèni, but they—they—You better go back." The funny thing was that Sam and George didn't laugh at all the way they were sure they would. They just kept solemnly staring the other way while Johnny said in a hoarse gruff voice, "Brèni, please! If you don't go back, I'll never be able to get away."

But she couldn't. She had to keep looking up at him, her blue eyes slowly widening. Then: "Johnny! Oh, Johnny." It sounded like a long-pent sigh escaping her lips at last. "I'll wait for you, Johnny. Don't you worry about Ma or Grandpa Jones. I'll work very hard. I'll take care of them. I promise. And I'll wait for you. I'll wait for a hundred years. Honest, Johnny, I will. I'll—"

"You better, Brèni," Johnny said. "I'll be mad as hell if you don't."

"Oh, but I will!" She tried to be merry; she tried to be very gay. "You can beat me if I don't. But you got to come back. Remember, Johnny! Because if you don't I—"

"Can't miss!" Johnny did his best to flash his white-toothed grin. "You said it yourself. 'Johnny Jones is immortal.' That's what you said, you silly goose." He flung one arm around her, pressing her body hard to his so she'd know she belonged to him. "Now go back," he told her brusquely and he wasn't grinning any more. "For God's sake, Brèni, go back. If you don't go back, I'll never be able to get away."

"I am going now." But she looked at his face once more from the crook of his arm. Just for an instant. Smiling a little. "We will see to it," she told him. "You and me, when you come back. We will see there'll always be a Johnny Jones in his house. The way there always has. The way there always must to keep the world like we dream it ought to be." She kissed him on the mouth. "Good-by, Johnny, good-by."

Then she spun hurriedly away. Johnny watched the stirring rhythm of her walk as she went back quickly to where the people stood. It was the clearest sight of her he ever had. Small, erect, dauntless in the pride of her desire, her tawny head taking all the light left captured under the stormy sky. Johnny was glad she didn't look back. Johnny couldn't have stood it if she had. So he turned at once. With Grandpa's seabag on his shoulder, he came up to where George and Sammy waited. And in silence the three of them went on.

WHEN Brèni looked around at last, she held her head high, standing with the others by an old stone well that looked a little like one that got bombed away in a place called Neudenkirke, not far from Rotterdam. They were all of them there, the women of Burnville and the men, watching the boys march off to war. The women and the limping men. The world was full of limping men; that's what Johnny said. Its meaning seemed clearer now. There was Frank Lebec, with his white mustache, ever since Verdun. Sammy's Pa, since Belleau Wood. Old George Burns too, for the matter of that. And even Grandpa Jones, though his went back to '98. They were watching younger shoulders swaying down the road this time, growing smaller and smaller all the while.

Just then the bomber patrol came roaring in from the hunt at sea. But Brèni's eyes didn't falter. She didn't let her head dart up, so full of fright and terror, the way it always had.



Whenever the earth got tangled up a mess, it was Johnny Jones who put it to rights again—Johnny and George and Sam.

Not now. She held her eyes steadfastly ahead where three men, all of the same small size in distance now, drew near to the turn of the road. The light in Brèni's eyes was like little flame-points dancing. The wild thing kept singing in her heart and because of it her lips could smile. She was certain which man was hers. She knew which one was Johnny Jones. Johnny, who was immortal. . . . She

never took her eyes from him. Not once—not till the three small specks abruptly went from sight.

Then she heard Ma Jones saying tonelessly, "Every time—it's like this every time. Every time them frock-coat fellahs go an' get it all messed up. I wish," she cried suddenly, her voice going hollow and fierce as a threat, "I wish they'd get it straight for good this time!"

"You must drop a penny, Mother Jones. You must drop a penny in the well." Brèni recalled what her father said. And now she knew. She knew when one well of hope got bombed away, you had to sink another in a better deeper place. "I am young enough," said Brèni. "I am young enough. And I believe enough. So if you drop a penny in the well, our wish is certain to come true."



The first of a fascinating series in which Mr. Keyne ventures the difficult art of prophecy and depicts dramatic events just after the close of this war.

by Gordon Keyne

PEACE HATH HER

WE seldom think of any successful man as being the victim of personal misfortune. Least of all has anyone so thought of Norman Shane. The public forgot him under the rush of world-shaking crises that followed the war's end; but many in high places remembered him keenly, and have since recalled him yet more keenly.

His meteoric rise via press and radio was due to his amazing knack, during the final phases of the war, of being on the precise spot where unexpected things happened. Among press serv-

ices and statesmen alike he won an uncanny reputation. The Paramushiro blitz, the frightful Nippon earthquake, the epic slaughter of Nipponese in China and Siberia, not to mention the decisive Battle of Nagasaki, all found Norman Shane on the job while others slept. It was remembered, too, that not only had he covered the surprising incidents that broke the Nazi power in the west, but he had predicted them.

All this was no accident, as the higher-ups well knew. They gave Norman Shane full credit for his exceptional mental powers. As his secretary, I

happen to know what flattering offers came to him. Then he vanished overnight.

I have no intention of giving the tale of Norman Shane's disappearance, except in brief passing mention. Rather, it is my privilege to reveal the sensational and amazing story of his come-back and triumph, which the world at large has not suspected. If we believe anything, we must believe that the Infinite Wisdom shapes a man to his work and that whatever is, is for the ultimate best by virtue of the Divine compassion.



Illustrated by L. R. Gustavson

VICTORIES

Norman Shane, then, was at the peak of his so-called success, the man of the hour, when fate hit him with everything she had. He was always careless of finances. They began to slip and then went with a crash. His wife and two-year-old son were killed in the token bombing of New York, that last vicious flare-up of the Nazi war effort; this happened while he lay shell-shocked from the Japan battle.

I saw him after he got home, to find himself wiped clean. He wrote my final salary-check, looked at the pile of radio-commentary and press offers

about covering the peace conference, then rose and walked out. He did not come back. That was his farewell bow. For two days the disappearance of Norman Shane filled the papers; then it was swamped under the weighty story of the Berlin massacres.

Even at this distance the memory of those ensuing months forms a gasping evil nightmare. While the peace conference gabbled at Vienna, while the far-flung forces of the New International Court held the world in a semblance of order, hatred and ambition looked up anew; and here at

*A voice announced, "His Majesty!"
And the King strode into the room.*

home were beginning those dreadful disorders threatening the very structure of our country. The six-month "period of discussion" was moving badly.

Luckily the Asiatic Congress at New Delhi, under the strong but phlegmatic Russian influence, kept the Far East well in hand while the last remnants of the Japanese forces, their homeland entirely laid in ashes, were being exterminated throughout the islands of the Pacific. Not that this did us much good at home, with selfish greed snatching at everything in sight—and then the army beginning to come home and wonder savagely about it.

Such was the situation when Norman Shane came so surprisingly to life.

I had been holding a temporary position, which petered out. On a Saturday evening I was in my apartment going over the want ads of the Sunday bulldog. Secretarial positions were hard to get, particularly for a cripple; my right foot had been on the blink ever since an automobile accident before the war left it crushed. I could get around all right, of course, but I had to use a stick.

I ANSWERED the telephone's call. "Yes, this is Hamilton Hammond." "Just a moment, please." A pause, a click, then a voice that electrified me. "Hello—this you, Ham?"

"Good Lord!" I cried. "Chief! It can't be you—"

"Easy, Ham," he broke in. "Glad I found you. Working somewhere?"

"No. Just looking for a position."

"Okay. You've got the old job back. Want it?"

"Nothing better in the world! Where can I see you?"

"Tomorrow afternoon at four. Room 2012, the Plaza Towers. Get hold of Sir Hugh Nevill, who landed here today and is at the Astoria. Bring him with you; tell him that the Secretary of State will be here. He'll come like a shot, since he came over here expressly to confer with that gentleman."

"Right," I said. "Sounds like old times, Mr. Shane! You're moving in big company."

I heard his harsh, unmusical laugh.

"Grapenuts now, peanuts later, maybe coconuts after a while. Four sharp—and don't call me Mr. Shane again except in company. And mind this, Ham—no publicity. *None!*"

"Okay, Norman," I replied joyously, and he hung up.

No publicity! Well, it was not the first time Norman Shane's secretary had kept his face zippered on a big story.

Oh, boy! Was I all hopped up with excited delight! I had been more like a friend than an employee to Shane, and the mere prospect of being back with him was like champagne. However, when I got in touch with Sir Hugh Nevill—he was the Prime Minister's confidential agent—it was like a dash of cold water. The name of Norman Shane meant nothing to him. When he found he was to meet the Secretary of State off the record, he changed his tune in a hurry.

He was, of course, one of the Old School Ties just then trying so desperately to pick up the pieces of the British Empire with one hand and hide the effort behind the other hand.

Government was staggering. The tragedy which now threatened to make King George's rule the last reign of the House of Windsor, had profoundly affected England, naturally; but the great emergence of Canada as heir to the old powers and traditions was by no means accepted in fact by the conservative die-hards.

FOUR sharp, Sir Hugh promised; and no publicity. So all I had to do was possess my rebellious soul in patience until I clasped Shane's big paw again; it was a hard job. My first indication of the terrific world-typhoon so soon to engulf us all came that same evening at nine-thirty. The phone rang at my bedside and I answered.

"Is this the Hammond who was secretary to Norman Shane?" asked a man's voice.

I assented.

"Do you know where Shane is now?"

"Naturally not," I said. "It is several months—"

"Yeah, I know all that," barked the other. "But you can get a message to him, eh?"

"I can try, yes."

"You'd damned well better. Tell him unless he takes the pinch off Sir Abdul Mohand and Kessiloy before Tuesday morning, he is a dead man; and what's more, Durochel is playing ball with us. That's all. He'll know the message didn't come from Judson."

He hung up with a laugh, leaving me all agape.

Kessiloy! He was the marvelous Soviet ace who had emerged from the shadow of the war-worn Stalin. He, with the Indian leader Sir Abdul, held the Asiatic Congress in firm control. They were the outstanding men of their respective nations—the men who gave the orders. To suggest that Norman Shane had put "the pinch" on such men was absurd!

Or was it? That mention of Judson had me floundering. Durochel was, of course, the vindictive figure who had emerged as the dominant force of the French Fourth Republic;

a figure sinister in some ways, but the idol of this wounded, fanatically republican France. Still—Judson!

This message hinted that Norman Shane might somehow be tied up with Judson. Like all the dynamic figures brought to the top in this new post-war world, David Judson was a giant, but a quiet and retiring giant. His fingers held the strings of motor and airplane combines; his fortune was beyond computation, easily the greatest in the United States; and he was utterly devoted to the cause of regenerating the world. He was an apostle of righteousness, and as yet no one knew whether he was to be dreaded as a fanatic or cheered as the great hope of democracy. He had never been interviewed—a fact which spoke with tacit thunders.

So, naturally, all this had me guessing. I made no effort to deliver the message. When I saw Shane on the morrow would be time enough. . . .

At five to four on Sunday afternoon I was loitering at the desk of the Plaza Towers, when Sir Hugh Nevill approached, big and bony and British in every line. Before he could make any inquiries, I beat him to it, unconsciously adopting Shane's manner and very words.

"Sir Hugh, I'm Mr. Shane's secretary, Hammond. Shall we go up?"

"Oh—how do!" He eyed me uncertainly but decided to accompany me. When we were in the Tower elevator, he ventured to unburden his mind. "Y'know, this is quite irregular. The Embassy in Washington does not know what to make of it, not in the least."

I merely nodded, and left him hanging in air as it were. We got off at the proper floor, and ran the gamut of obvious secret-service men who seemed to have their orders about us. The door of the room named by Shane was opened to us by Norman Shane himself.

"Ah, Sir Hugh! I'm Shane; delighted," he said. "You're expected in the next room; thank you. Hello, Ham! Welcome back, old man; you're a sight for sore eyes."

We must have stood gripping hands for a full half-minute. At first I was inexpressibly shocked. Norman Shane looked a full twenty years older. His hair was edged with gray; his long, high-boned features had become gaunt, with wide, thin-set lips and sunken dark eyes. He looked sixty or more, he who was not yet forty.

Yet there was something new and wonderful about him. I could not place it. He seemed quite well, but there was a gathered force in him that struck out at you; more than a force, an electric something, a quality intangible. I could feel it bring me right up on my toes. Then, one long arm about my shoulders, he urged me into the next room.

Nevill stood talking with our own Secretary of State and a third man who had his back to me. Shane spoke out at them.

"Gentlemen, my friend and confidential secretary, Mr. Hamilton Hammond, whom you expected."

The others turned with nods of acknowledgment, and I saw that the third man was David Judson. This flustered me, and I plunged out with what was on my mind.

"I've a message for you, Norman. A peculiar one. Personal, I think."

Shane laughed harshly and smote me on the shoulder. If he had been ill, as his looks indicated, he was well enough now; that long-jointed frame of his had its old strength.

"No secrets! That's going to be a slogan in the world one of these days; let's start it here. No secrets, Ham! What's the message?"

I repeated it verbatim, while Sir Hugh Nevill eyed us, ill at ease. Shane stood rubbing his big thin nose, his face thoughtful. Into the worn, poised features of the Secretary of State flitted a touch of alarm. David Judson frowned, and spoke in his shy, startled way.

"Shane, I don't like this! Looks as though they've guessed our activity. Do you know from whom it came?"

"Yes; the enemy. What do names matter?" said Shane slowly. "So they've won Durochel over! Too bad; we needed him. Now we must realign the set-up in France. And they give me until Tuesday morning! Obviously, they don't know I'll be in London by then. Yes, Judson, this means a serious fight, I fear."

"Mr. Secretary, I sympathize with you; we're going to have some ugly things to face, here at home; and there's no shrinking. We must face 'em. Well, gentlemen, sit down, sit down! Here's tea on the table, Sir Hugh, or drinks if you prefer—"

THE Briton was pretty well bowled over. So was I. To find Norman Shane not only one with these men, but even regarded with respect by them! There was a lot to be explained. Sir Hugh, however, coolly turned to the man whom he considered foremost.

"It's jolly meeting you like this, Mr. Secretary!"

The Secretary of State shook his head, smiling slightly.

"I fear not, Sir Hugh. I believe you came over to discuss with me those proposals of your government at Vienna and your colonial program?"

"Well sir, something of the sort."

"I must turn you over to Mr. Shane, here; he can, I'm sure; put our position much more eloquently than I. Eh, Shane? Should Sir Hugh have his answer the day after he lands? Or should it dangle through the usual red tape and formal visits of weeks?"



Hammond struck up with his stick, and hit against an automatic pistol.

"Well," rejoined Norman Shane, a twinkle in his eye, "Sir Hugh doesn't know it yet, but he might as well be the first victim of the new diplomacy. Sit down, my dear fellow, do! Cigarettes? Hammond, I could do with a spot of tea myself, if you'll pour it—"

He drawled along in his easy, unhurried way, but far from being put at ease, Nevill was more shaken every moment. This sort of diplomacy was not in his book at all; he just could not believe what was happening. Yet, in this room, a part of the world's future was being settled.

"Sir Hugh, I'd like to tell you one of my favorite stories, by way of preamble," Shane said quietly. "It's a symbolic story, yet absolutely true."

"Very glad, I'm sure," Nevill replied politely.

"It's about a man named Lowndes, a Congressman in the early days of this republic. A speaker of the House was to be elected, and Lowndes was asked to attend a party caucus to get the program lined up. It was then that William Lowndes uttered words which few Congressmen of the present day would even comprehend; but which are symbolic of much in our new order of things. His reply was:

"No sir! I will attend to the election of a Speaker of the House of Representatives—in the House of Representatives!"

The implications were not lost upon Nevill.

"I'd scarcely call the reply symbolic of either your government or ours," he said.

"Right! That's why you're dealing with me rather than with Washington," Shane said cheerfully. "Suppose we speak the exact truth, without sentiment or personal bias, without evasion or diplomatic double-talk; that's all ended now."

"ONE moment," struck in Nevill, struggling for adjustment. "Whom do you represent? Why should I discuss anything with you? Are you speaking for Washington?"

"Yes and no. We're allies; we hold to the same moral code; we speak the same language. We of the United Nations won the war. But this is a question of political wisdom and common sense. I'm speaking for certain men, certain forces, behind our governments, who have banded together to enforce their ideals on the world."

Nevill concealed a slight sneer.

"Do you refer to the well-meaning group of theorists to whom the press have given the name of the Freedoms, Coalition?" he demanded.

Shane assented gravely. "The Coalition of the Four Freedoms—yes. Men powerful in our various governments, in Canada, in Australia. Men able to swing popular sentiment; indeed, popular sentiment is behind them. The Freedoms Coalition—a good name. I can speak for them. In doing so, I speak for our governments."

"Perhaps," said Nevill. "Very well. What have you to say?"

"Lord Auckland's government is trying to establish certain bases of action at Vienna. You are here to obtain our support for this action at the Peace Conference, also at the Asiatic Congress in New Delhi. Correct?"

Nevill, intent and silent, assented with a gesture.

"I am sorry to say," went on Shane, "that Lord Auckland is being used as a tool."

"You speak of our Prime Minister, sir!" interjected Nevill sharply.

"I do. A most estimable man personally; but behind him stand all the forces of reaction, of greed, of selfish interest, of an outworn system against

which your own people have revolted. Therefore we refuse your proposals. Our duty is to the future and to the people of the world, not to cliques and classes."

"Suppose we adopt your own prescription and speak clearly," said Nevill. "Let us be concrete and to the point. I am tired of fine theories."

"So are we." Shane gave him one lightning glance. "If Lord Auckland's proposals go through, there will be no International Court of Justice. Upon this Court, the hopes of the world are fastened. For this Court, we are fighting. The Freedom from Fear of Aggression is the most essential of the Four Freedoms. May I quote the words of that great statesman of China, Dr. Hu Shih?"

"If you will be so kind," said Nevill sarcastically. He was pale with anger.

"All of us," quoted Shane, "must learn the plain lesson of history that law and order and peace never mean the absence of force—but are always dependent upon organized force for effective enforcement. This shall be the Last War, only if we can organize the world's economic and military power to make recurrence of aggressive wars impossible."

THERE was a moment of silence. Then Shane continued:

"That is your answer, Sir Hugh. None of the nations associated with us will support Lord Auckland and your government at the Vienna Peace Conference."

"You theorists would see England go to smash, then?" snapped Nevill.

"No. It'll go back to the English people themselves, who are ready to take over their own government. Like us, they resent the selfish interests, the reactionary forces, who have come together all over the world in the effort to retain the old order. But we too have come together. And that is our answer."

"Mr. Secretary!" Ignoring Shane, Nevill turned and spoke in cool restraint. "I cannot accept this pleasantry as indicative of your government's attitude. I must insist upon having an interview with the President."

"Why not?" The wise old Secretary of State, with his faint smile, nodded assent. "You shall have every facility, Sir Hugh. I think you will find that the people of the world have for the first time become articulate; their force is greater than that of governments."

Still very white, Sir Hugh Nevill bowed stiffly and walked out.

Upon the silence intruded the voice of David Judson—controlled, gentle, penetrating.

"Well handled, Shanel! You're the man for the job. So the die is cast! Open covenants reached openly; peace to all men; the Four Freedoms En-

forced! Dictate to the world; accept the task bravely, do it bravely, say! England is the first test; we stand or fall by the result. You'll not find Lord Auckland an easy man to handle."

"No," assented Shane. "He's an honest man, but the tool of scoundrels."

"And if Durochel has been lined up against us by this same world-wide conspiracy, he'll be dangerous. Do you think this threat against your life is to be taken seriously?"

Norman Shane looked thoughtfully out the window at the view of the East River below us. He nodded.

"Judson, there's an old axiom that the three most dangerous antagonists are a small man, a cripple, and a hungry lawyer." That was all. It expressed his whole mind. Then I recalled that Durochel was a *mutilé* of the war. But Shane suddenly swung around and caught my arm, deep concern in his eyes.

"Hammond, old fellow—I forgot you! Forgive me, forgive me; not for the world would I have hurt you!"

I laughed. "You couldn't hurt me. Your axiom is dead right as regards me, also. As you know, I've deliberately made myself into a potentially dangerous person. It comes in handy at times, crippled or not."

His face cleared. Judson put out his hand to me, a smile touching his smooth, shy features.

"A pleasure, Mr. Hammond. Good-by, Shane. I think all's clear. Mr. Secretary—"

"Oh, I'm on my way also." The Secretary of State shook hands with

us, and held Shane's big paw for a moment. "God bless you, Norman! You hold all of our hopes."

Shane saw them out, and came back.

"Sit down, Ham. You're still incredulous, I see. We must send for your personal effects; we're leaving tonight for England."

"Incredulous?" I repeated. "Flabbergasted, you mean. When I last saw you—"

"I had nothing to live for," he said gravely. "In fact, I didn't care or intend to live! But Judson got hold of me; he gave me everything to live for, in a higher sense. Not material things but the opportunity of this work, this service to humanity. Now we've openly begun what we've been secretly preparing for, and I need you with me again. Judson, you see, is only one of many kindred souls in every country—"

Except for the scene just witnessed, I must have thought him insane. Norman Shane, in a word, had undertaken to dictate the peace—and was doing it. Nor was it so fantastic a thing as first appeared.

IN all countries, though chiefly in our own, were such men as David Judson, of vast influence in their own governments. These clear-thinking, clear-visioned altruists were bitterly aware of the ruthless greed once more arising in the world. More sincerely than the ill-starred "Men of Good Will" preceding the war, though of similar intent, they had banded together in the resolve to take action. To point their invisible phalanx, they needed an exceptional man, and had him in Norman Shane.

For the moment, these men could hold in check the fearful internal convulsions that were threatening to disrupt the United States. The most pressing need was to cope with affairs abroad and settle the larger political angles—and chiefly the International Court of Justice, which beckoned all peoples to peace and freedom. This Court, the hope of the world against future wars, was bitterly feared by selfish interests and reactionaries.

Shane's strength lay in the tremendous though intangible moral power that he wielded by virtue of the key men everywhere backing him, and in his own genius and absolute conviction of the right; for such conviction inspires a superhuman audacity and power. Just how much, if any, authority he had to speak for our own country, I never learned. But he could get things done.

The six-month period of transition following the war, during the Peace Conference discussions at Vienna, found the situation both good and bad. Evil had battled itself into a hideous exhaustion; the whole earth was uttering an agonized cry for peace

What Do You Think?

These are anxious days for all of us. We are united solidly in the war effort; yet otherwise we are a vastly diverse nation; and no two of us have just the same personal problems. When recently we published excerpts from James Mursell's "A Personal Philosophy for Wartime," it occurred to us that probably each reader could write at least one significant and helpful chapter for such a book—and no two would be just alike.

With this idea in mind, we would welcome letters from you, our readers, telling us what you are thinking about—about your business now or your career after the war; the war's effect on you or those dear to you; or if you are in one of the armed Services, a letter which would interest your fellow-readers on your recent experiences or expectations for the future—these within the censorship regulations, of course.

We will pay twenty-five dollars for each letter bought by us. No letters will be returned. All letters submitted will become the property of McCall Corporation. Address: "What Do You Think?" Blue Book Magazine, 230 Park Avenue, New York, N. Y.

and security. High ideals, glorious aspirations, the principles of liberty and fraternity, had emerged in a mighty resurgence. Yet selfishness and vested greed and old interests were struggling for survival. Durochel, the great French patriot, was now becoming Durochel the Dictator, and there were many like him. As Shane expressed it to me:

"Small men, cripples, hungry lawyers, all grabbing hard! Petty men in great places throw long shadows but bulk low on the horizon; only by the sun's sinking are they made fearsome. My job is to remove this menace and enforce peace and freedom—yes, I said *enforce!* I'm just back from Europe. I was very ill while there, but got many things done."

"What's this about putting the pinch on Kessiloy and Sir Abdul Mohand?" I asked. "True or false?"

This fetched a laugh from him. "Both are our men, heart and soul! But the Asiatic Congress is no soft spot. The Javanese peoples are rabid for immediate freedom instead of the twenty-year interregnum proposed by the Dutch; the Indian factions are making trouble. Oh, the complications everywhere form a terrific tangle! Yet we've established the basic principles of the Four Freedoms; we're getting the right men in power, which is the main thing. Our immediate danger lies in the Vienna Conference."

"Why?"

"The doctrine of peace and freedom, of the International Court, makes 'em rebel. It's hard to make the French give up their reactionary dreams of subject colonies. Now I'm out to lay down that doctrine as a dictation of the Freedoms Coalition."

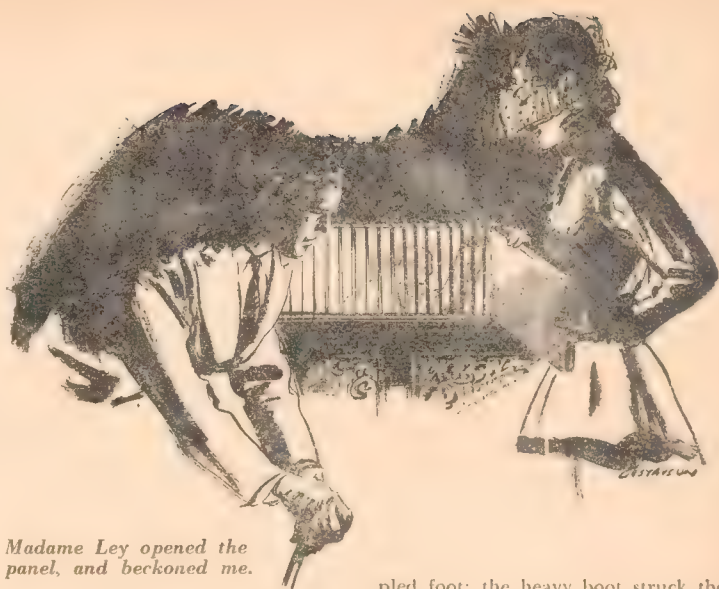
"You're going to London, you say?"

"We are, yes; leaving in an hour or two." He smiled again. "Lord Auckland's government won't take this thing lying down. The old system must win or perish forever. You see, Ham, my value is not just as a mouth-piece, but as a thinking and fighting agent. I always had luck in predicting the moves of the enemy, you know."

"Oh! You're doing that now?"

He nodded. "I'll land in London knowing just about what Auckland is going to do—and prepared for him; my wires are all laid. There's my value in a nutshell. He'll have to move fast; he has already prepared an act, the Auckland Act, which would cripple the International Court. We must block it. Luckily, we have the English people with us, and the Trades Unions really stand for social justice. No labor racketeers in England."

Dimly, I could get his point. In the old war days, his accuracy in predicting each enemy move had been uncanny; call it intuition or sheer



Madame Ley opened the panel, and beckoned me.

brain-power—he had the knack. Now he was putting it to use in a larger field and keeping one step ahead of the game.

"But now, Ham, we'd better get your things over here and prepare for the trip. Heaven knows when we'll be back or where we'll go! I'm taking a handbag and a briefcase. On the plane, we'll settle down to work."

"And that threatening message?"

He gave me a look. "There's no lack of assassins in the world; but don't let it worry you. We'll be off and away before anyone suspects that we're going."

ASSASSINS! Yes, during those impassioned months following the war, when the wave of revenge was being slowly throttled, assassins had claimed many victims—Nehral Das, General Hung Wang, Baron Corvo, Marshal Falconheim, and many others. This was in my mind as we packed our few things and made ready to leave. Shane had no escort, no bodyguards; he refused impatiently any such precautions. But he learned something that night.

The taxicab entrance of the Plaza Towers was within the building. We came down in the elevator; as the car reached the ground floor and the door swung back, I started out first. That saved Shane's life.

Two men were standing there as though waiting for an up car. One of them jerked around. I caught the gleam of metal as his hand moved—and, in nervous excitement, struck up with my stick. It hit against the automatic pistol just as the weapon exploded. I lashed out with my crip-

pled foot; the heavy boot struck the shin of the second man and spoiled his aim. The bursting explosions in my very face maddened me.

But I had spoiled their intent; that was the main thing. The two were caught and pinioned; Shane himself lent a hand in this, while they cursed him viciously. Housemen dragged the belabored assassins away. We went to our waiting cab; on the way to the airport Shane put his hand on my knee. I was still trembling with the reactions; I am no hero.

"Old man, God bless your impetuosity!" he said. "I don't say thank you merely for my own sake; my life means little to me. But for the cause it may mean much." His tone was grave....

Half an hour later, I was hard at work at twenty thousand feet altitude.

Our plane was one of the new Starbeams that had captured the post-war commercial airways for Judson. In this sound-proofed, oxygenated cabin we scarcely knew we were aloft. And the nature of the work was enough to banish any lingering doubt of my own sanity or of Norman Shane's incredible mission.

Radiograms galore had to be answered, and there were amazing bits of agenda demanding commentary or approval. Here, for example, was the Churchill program of national rights, which has since become the very cornerstone of freedom for individual peoples. Here was the skeleton framework of the International Court of Justice, as drawn up by the members of our own Supreme Court and their international advisers. Here was the famous Chungking Code, just approved by the Australian Parliament, which Shane was annotating for presentation to the Asiatic Congress—all



The uniformed man got me properly; he knew all the tricks.

and Seymour Holles, Governor of the Bank of England. As yet, of course, the press had not caught on to Norman Shane's activity. Now and later, he managed remarkably well in keeping his work and his own importance under cover.

It is not my purpose to brief out any history of the times; the world knows what was done during these

Morgan, in his burly, dynamic way of going straight to the heart of things, asked Shane what his plans might be.

"I have some arrangements to make," replied Norman Shane cryptically. "I must confer with you first of all. Then with Auckland and Holles."

"Good. Auckland wants you to come to Downing Street this evening."

Shane smiled slowly.

"I'm afraid not. Suppose you and I get down to business this afternoon. I think we can reach a thorough understanding in an hour or two. This evening, I'd like to see Holles, if he can run out to Richmond."

"I'm sure he will. I'll arrange it."

"And Sir James, I have a statement for you to issue to the press tonight. Get it into the morning papers over your name. It's about the Freedoms Coalition refusing to stand with your government at Vienna. Auckland wants to keep the thing quiet. We must break it out into the open, even if it gives England a shock."

"Very well. But the Prime Minister—Auckland, you know! You must see him!"

"I think," said Shane, "that he must see me, rather. At your house. Tomorrow evening."

AND that was how it was done, to the delight of Sir James Morgan, who had been a Welsh coal-miner and had scant respect for red tape or formality. He was whole-heartedly for freedom and the International Court of Justice, which meant for us; but he was in a ticklish spot. He made this clear during the afternoon conference. . . .

Auckland, standing for the reactionaries and what Morgan dourly called the Devil's Disciples, had two trump cards—the Bank of England and the King—with which to smash the popular movement. The tragedy which during the war had befallen the Royal Family left the King an object of the greatest sympathy and popularity among his own people. His adherence to the old order would break down every hope of progress. And no one knew how he would lean. Morgan feared that he would naturally support Auckland's government.

Parliament was not sitting. If Holles, as Governor of the Bank of England, signed the threatened Auckland Act, the King would sign it and the Ministry would put it automatically into effect. This meant financial disruption, stark ruin to the middle and lower classes, and bitter defiance to the International Court of Justice—not to mention our own Freedoms Coalition. That is, of course, from our own viewpoint. From that of Auckland and the unseen interests behind him, it meant English solidarity and independence, and the rights of other men be damned!

historic documents in the sight of world democracy.

And here, too, was a secretly procured abstract of the Auckland Act, upon which the old vested interests were pinning their hopes; Shane pored over this a long time.

We caught a few hours of sleep before landing at the magnificently rebuilt Croydon airport. *En route*, it was settled by radio that we were to stop with Sir James Morgan,—the Laborite opposition leader, at his Richmond home. Shane neatly sidestepped invitations from both Lord Auckland

critical months. What I must set down is the personal element that has never been told—the savage drama centering about Norman Shane, in which I had a part, and the astonishing manner in which so many things were accomplished, when even a mere discussion or conference could turn out to be an incredible adventure.

Aside from the usual landing formalities, we were the center of little interest, and Morgan whisked us away in his car without delay. It was early afternoon; we had made the crossing in slightly over twelve hours.

Seymour Holles came for dinner that same evening—Monday, it was.

He was not a person of imposing strength. He was gentle, scholarly, quiet, a man lifted by imagination and financial genius to his present high position. His private life had been tragic; his wife was dead, his two older sons killed in the war; and the third son was listed as "missing" in the last days of the conflict, during the desperate Caucasus campaign.

All this, though at the moment I did not know it, was of vital import.

Dinner over, Holles, Shane and I adjourned to the library, our host not intruding. Holles nodded to the general financial scheme of the Freedoms Coalition and approved the International Court of Justice, which had already begun its operations. To my surprise, he was in agreement with us, and not merely under the spell of Norman Shane's magnetism.

"In this country, Mr. Shane, the somewhat indefinite forces of the Freedoms Coalition are resented. Its pressure is resented as American dictation."

"But you know better!" exclaimed Shane. "Your own countrymen in general are behind us! We represent the best men, the best thought, of all countries!"

"And the highest idealism," said Holles frankly. "Yes; this idealism appeals to me. A change in our system of government has no terrors for me; I'm not an Old School Tie, as the saying goes. In my candid opinion, once the Auckland Act went into effect, the ruin of England and the Empire would be assured. What Hitler could not do, would be done by our own stubborn folly."

Shane was astonished. "I didn't know you were of this mind, Mr. Holles!"

"Seymour Holles is, yes; but the Governor of the Bank of England is not." A wry smile touched the lips of our visitor. "Officially I'm tied to Auckland; I'm bound to support him. Yet, this very day, I definitely refused to sign the Auckland Act."

Shane fairly beamed. At this moment I was summoned to the phone to answer a call for him, and went rather impatiently.

"This is Mr. Hammond, Mr. Shane's secretary," I said. "You'll have to give me any message for him."

THE phone was in an alcove of the library. The woman's voice that greeted me had a most peculiar timbre. I am fairly impervious to females, but the singular quality of this voice left me tingling in every nerve. "Very well, Mr. Hammond. Ask him whether he will see Madame Ley tomorrow afternoon."

Some short-haired nut, I thought, disgruntled. However, I took the

woman's name to Shane, and was startled by its effect upon him. For a moment he held that big hairy hand of his over the weary eyes.

"No!" he exclaimed, almost violently. "Wait; it may be important. Perhaps she'll see you instead. Give her my respects. Tell her I'll gladly see her later, but not tomorrow."

I repaired to the phone with the message. Madame Ley uttered a soft little laugh.

"Poor Norman—later, eh? But later is too late. Yes, Mr. Hammond; let us say five tomorrow afternoon. If you'll be at the Ritz-Carlton entrance, I'll pick you up. Good-by."

Here was mystery. When Holles took his departure, Shane could scarcely discuss him with me, for his impatient queries anent Madame Ley.

"Holles is with us, you say? I'm not so sure. He's honest, but a weak stick. He may turn dead against us. Well, what did she say? Quickly! Will she see you?"

I told him, and asked no questions. He nodded, once more looking very tired.

"I can't refuse her, Ham; yet I can't see her tomorrow. You see, old man—I know her quite well. In fact, I'm under the deepest of obligations to her. She saved my life when I was desperately ill in Paris, a couple of months ago. But tomorrow afternoon I'm busy with the leading men of Morgan's party, who should be in control of Auckland within thirty days; it's vital. And tomorrow night, the conference with Auckland."

"Who is she?" I asked.

"The widow of Voldimir Ley, the Soviet field-marshal killed by the Japs in Siberia. I understand she's English by birth."

"Can you give me any line on what she's after, on what to look out for?"

"Ham, she's an angel incarnate," he said earnestly, "but she may be playing the devil's game; I've heard strange things about her. Nobody knows. She's a dark mystery, but she's the most powerful backstage woman in Europe—in the world! Be careful!"

That he might have become tangled up with this woman during his dark period of submergence, was an unworthy thought to anyone who knew Norman Shane. But the mystery remained.

The morning papers, giving over Sir Henry Morgan's name a straight intimation that the Auckland government had lost the support of the Freedoms Coalition, convulsed England. It was no secret that this Coalition spoke for a number of nations and had vast influence. However, I promised to keep away from what is now stale history.

At five minutes before five that afternoon I limped up to the curb before the Ritz-Carlton. It had oc-

curred to me that I had no means of knowing the woman; but I need not have worried. A Morris limousine wheeled in, and the door opened and I heard my name.

"Well met, Mr. Hammond!" said the voice of the telephone. "Get in, please."

IOBEYED, with a lively curiosity. Rain-clouds quickened the evening, and it was nearly dark. I could see only that she was black-garbed and had a black veil; this was put back from her face, which was indistinct and apparently undistinguished. But her voice was sheer magic in its slow, quiet loveliness.

"We have not met, but I know of you," she said, as the door slammed and we started away. "We must talk now; there may be no chance later. What would you do to help Mr. Shane?"

"Anything," I said simply.

"Ah! I like that answer. Please believe the same of me! Only yesterday, I learned that certain things which I have arranged were meant to injure him. I learned, too late, that he was here. I'm not entirely a free agent; what I've done cannot be undone. However, it may be nullified—with your help. If only I could have seen Norman Shane himself! But the chance is gone. Now it is too late. Will you help?"

"Yes, of course," I replied. "Where are we going?"

"To my house," she replied. "A meeting is taking place there, now. You'll understand when you see it."

"And just what are you getting out of all this? Why are you doing it?"

"To place Mr. Shane under further obligations to me. I shall want something in return, yes; I'll take my chance of getting it from him."

Well, that left it up to Shane and relieved me. If she thought she could make Norman Shane compromise on anything, she had another guess coming.

"And may I ask what's happening at your house?" I asked cheerfully.

"Seymour Holles is to sign the Auckland Act. Of course, Lord Auckland knows nothing about how it's being managed; he has nothing to do with it."

That hit me between the eyes, and no mistake.

"You want me to prevent it?" I demanded.

"Certainly not. I expect you to have brains, if you're Mr. Shane's secretary!" she rejoined with a touch of acid that made me squirm. "But here we are, I'm afraid. Remember, I'll do anything possible to help, but cannot jeopardize myself. I have too much at stake."

Ah, that woman! I've often wondered—how much did she foresee, how

far did she plan? The only thing certain is that she betrayed her associates that night, for the sake of Norman Shane.

We turned in at a drive. My impression was that it was one of those once-elegant old houses just off Berkeley Square, but a misty rain had begun, and I could see little. The car stopped under a porte-cochère; the house door opened, and a light flashed on. A butler opened the car door for us. He was a large, soldierly man, and Madame Ley spoke in English.

"Have the gentlemen arrived, Nicolai?"

He replied in Russian, obviously; I knew nothing of it. We passed into a large entrance hall. Madame Ley did not pause, but led me straight down the hall to another door. My stick made no sound on the thick carpet. She opened this door and preceded me into a narrow but lighted passage. It had a stone floor, and she made me a quick gesture.

"Carefull! No noise!"

I was careful. We went along the passage on a rather sharp rise and came to a level. Behind us were the lights, none ahead; it was dim here. But in the wall was a long and narrow panel with a brass button-holder. She took hold of the button and swung open the little panel like a door, and beckoned me to come look beside her. I obeyed, caught one fragrant and intoxicating whiff of her perfume—and forgot all else in the scene before me. We looked through an iron grill, no doubt a ventilator, into a room below.

THREE men sat there. One was Seymour Holles, his thinly refined features perturbed, his eyes strained and anxious. He was just handling a number of what looked like enlarged photographs to one of the two men with him. Both were in uniform—English, I thought.

"Yes, yes, yes," he said nervously. "That is my son Charles, certainly; I would know him anywhere! He was listed as missing in the last days of the war."

"He is your only surviving son, I believe," said one of the two.

"And here," said the other, producing an envelope, "is a note in his handwriting. You will notice the date; it is only three weeks old. You see, we have been anxious to neglect no detail that will convince you of our *bona fides*."

Both spoke with a slight accent; they were not English, despite the uniforms. Holles tore at the envelope, examined the sheet of paper within, and looked up excitedly.

"His very handwriting!" he cried out. "He is alive and well! Thank God, gentlemen, and you! How can I repay you for this kindness to an old man? Where is he?"

The two exchanged a glance, and smiled slightly.

"One moment, sir," said one. "We know where he is, yes; we have been in touch with him—we can arrange for his return to England. Or you can do so, once you know the spot. However, these are rather tough times for old soldiers. We're deeply interested in the political situation, and if England goes under the heel of these damned Americans, we'd suffer. So, Mr. Holles, we'd like to have your signature to these three copies of the Auckland Act."

"After which," added the other smoothly, "I shall run down to the country with you for two or three days, until the King has put his signature to the document."

Well, there it was out in the open. Sign up—as the Ministry desired—or else see your lost son really lost! Never for an instant, of course, did poor Holles even suspect that Auckland or others of the Ministry knew anything of this shenanigan.

I shall draw a veil over his agonies; for they were agonies. He was no strong Roman, to walk out and tell them all to go to hell. When it became obvious that he was about to yield, Madame Ley closed the slot again, beckoned me, and I followed her back into the entrance hall. There she paused and spoke, quietly and composedly.

"It's a matter of moments, Mr. Hammond. One of those men is driving Holles down to a place in the country, just as they said. The other takes the three signed copies of the document directly to Downing Street. I'm sending him in my Lanchester limousine. Now, what action do you wish to take? Up to a certain point, remember, I can assist you."

I could have cursed her cheerfully. Instead, I took a cigarette from a box on the hall table and lit it.

"Why not let me drive your Lanchester car?" I asked.

A smile came to her oddly expressionless face; for an instant I had a swift glimpse of vivacious loveliness—then it was gone. She turned away.

"Very well. Nicolai will see that you have the chauffeur's uniform. Move quickly!"

The Russian butler came, caught swift directions from her, and beckoned me. I followed him, not far, into a basement room—what the English call "offices." Here I worked fast, changing into whipcord coat and pants and cap. Nicolai led me outside by a rear way; two cars were standing in a courtyard, one a Lanchester limousine, empty.

"This car, sir," said Nicolai. "The other will go out first."

Swiftly he showed me the workings of the car; while we were still at it, the other car rolled off through the

wet to the porte-cochère. I started the Lanchester and presently followed; rain was falling briskly. The other car disappeared through iron gates into the street. I halted by the door.

One of the two uniformed men came out, talking with Madame Ley. She waved good-by. He popped into the car. The door slammed, and off we went.

I drove blindly along wet, empty streets, picked my spot, and drew up to the curb. I was confident of myself; I had deliberately studied and practiced man-killing in the best manner of the Marines and Commandos. One never suspects a cripple—until too late.

"Must be a flat tire," I said, and got out, meaning to open the rear door and get my man as he sat, briefcase beside him, at a disadvantage.

BUT like a flash he opened the rear door himself and stepped out to the wet curb beside me. A startled oath escaped him. He reached under his coat—and there was only one thing to do, and do fast.

I whammed him against the car, and was putting my knee into him when my foot slipped in the wet and went out from under me. That was fatal. Before I could recover, he got me, and got me properly; he too was up to all the tricks. I staggered away and dropped, sick and faint, my senses reeling. I could see him take to his heels and go legging it down the street and around the first corner and out of sight.

The briefcase! That was what I wanted. But it was two or three minutes before I could even get to my feet, agony coursing through me; he had reached me with two low and deadly kicks. I forced myself up at last, and painfully got over to the car. I hung on to it, sobbing with the hurt that stabbed at every movement.

Finally I summoned up energy and reached in. Eureka! Nothing else mattered—he had left the briefcase! It was there on the rear seat still. I clutched it, and gasped with blessed relief. Those three copies of the Auckland Act would never go to the King now!

Richmond was the first thing—Richmond and Norman Shane. But time was getting on, and Richmond was far away, and I had no notion where I was or how to get there; nor did I have ability to handle the car. I was faint and dizzy again. Luckily, a taxi came pumping down the street. Clutching the briefcase, I stumbled out and signaled with my stick. It drew up.

"Look here," I said, "I've been taken violently ill and can't drive. Can you take me out to Richmond?"

"Hop in, guv'nor," said the driver, and I obeyed—but not hopping.

I could just reach the seat, and give him the address of Sir James Morgan's unpretentious house—in Sheen Road, it was. Then I collapsed in a dead faint. And I never woke up the whole time that conformed taxi was crawling the long miles out to Richmond, in the rain. If you know London, you know what a trip it was.

When I did revive, we were standing before Morgan's house. Shane and Morgan and a couple of servants were helping me out. The sickness had passed, and I could stand.

"The briefcase, Norman! The briefcase!" I exclaimed. Shane nodded and got it. They helped me in. Morgan poured a drink into me, and Shane got me upstairs to the rooms we occupied. When we were alone, I gasped out one word.

"Auckland?"

"He's here," said Shane. "We've just started at it, hammer and tongs. Better get to bed, old man!"

"Lord, no! Let me into some of my own clothes—we've got Auckland where we want him! I'll talk as I dress."

I did so. Sandwiches and coffee came up for me. I grabbed a bite while I talked, and got out of the whiplard livery into my own clothes. Shane, I noted, was rather intent on the time, but he soon was giving his attention to my story.

"That slip of the foot was humiliating, all right," I concluded. "But now you've got the game in your own hands—quite literally! In that briefcase you're holding. We've won after all. Why, what's wrong? What is it, Norman?"

Shane rose and came over to me, and laid his big hand on my shoulder.

"Ham, I'm damned sorry to have to tell you the truth," he said. "You deserve better, but it must be told. The briefcase is empty except for a few letters. Here—look."

He held it open. He was right. A more bitter and terrible moment I have never known.

I CAME down a little later; he was closeted with Lord Auckland in the library, and welcomed me warmly. Auckland was his usual urbane, polished self; he would have appeared entirely master of the situation at his own execution. I sank back into a chair, producing what papers or agreements Shane desired, and keeping miserably to myself.

Between them, in a suave way, things went from bad to worse. Again I noted that Shane was intently watching the time. He refused absolutely to compromise in any form; Auckland, in the manner of one who held high trumps and knew it, refused point blank to accept any dictation from the Coalition of the Four Freedoms, and did not favor the International Court.

Then Auckland went on to polite but bitter threats. If England withdrew from the Vienna conference, the peace would be disrupted; other nations might follow her example; the whole economic and political program would be changed and ruined, from our point of view.

"You could not do this terrible thing to the world!" cried Shane, tormented.

"We do not regard it as terrible, but as the safest course, sir. Perhaps you are aware of what would be involved by the Auckland Act—"

"Holles will never sign it," broke in Shane firmly. "He said as much yesterday."

Lord Auckland smiled. "Holles has signed it; I received the triplicate copies from him just before coming here. His Majesty will sign it tomorrow."

Shane stared at him, rugged face alive with anguish.

"Have you a copy of that Act, Lord Auckland?"

"I have the three copies with me. You shall see for yourself." From his own briefcase that lay open beside him, Auckland produced three documents and showed them to Shane.

"Parliament would never permit this!" murmured Shane. He was, I thought, stalling for time. He had arranged one of his devastating little effects: I wondered what it could be. Nothing, I thought, could save the day for us now.

"Parliament is not sitting," Auckland suavely rejoined. "Under the Defense Act, the signature of the Governor of the Bank is all that's necessary; and that of His Majesty will put the act into execution."

Shane nodded with a tragic air, which Lord Auckland seemed to thoroughly enjoy. He laid out the three copies of the Act on the table.

"Yes, yes," he said. "I see that Holles has signed, indeed. Too bad." He glanced at his watch. I saw his face suddenly clear; the moment had come. The moment—for what? He swung around to Auckland. "But, my lord, why wait until tomorrow for the King to sign? Why not do it tonight?"

"Eh?" said Auckland, surprised. "I'm afraid I don't follow you—"

A bell rang softly. Norman Shane came to his feet. The door was flung open, and a voice announced outside.

"His Majesty the King!"

And, upon my word, the King strode into the room alone!

He was in some sort of uniform, I know not what; he looked more gaunt and tall than in his pictures. He shook hands with Shane, who was smiling and unsurprised; he shook hands with Auckland, who was lost in stupefied amazement, and then with me, at Shane's introduction.

"NOW, then," he said briskly, "will you explain this, Mr. Shane?"

"Certainly, Your Majesty. Here are some documents for your signature." Shane pointed to the outspread papers. "This is the Auckland Act, which will once more disrupt the world and head it for new wars, Lord Auckland and I are at total disagreement. Your Majesty's Government and those for whom I speak are at total disagreement. And if I may say so, Your Majesty's Government and the people of England and her empire are also close to total disagreement."

"Yes, I'm aware of that," the King said quietly and unexpectedly. "Auckland, do you actually desire me to sign this insufferable Act?"

"If Your Majesty will permit me to explain," began Auckland, who was far too old a hand at the game to lose his poise, "I believe that—"

Then and there, I veritably believe, the ghost of the old Sailor King stirred in the room.

"No, by God!" burst forth the King in furious violence. "I know all about it; I've been told the truth. I'll never sign that double-damned Act of yours, Auckland—never! Let your government go to the devil. I've made my choice! I stand with the English people, with the Four Freedoms, with the hope of the world! I'm issuing a public statement to this effect tomorrow, and precedent be damned! Lord Rawdon, at Vienna, shall be instructed to throw his full influence and vote to the International Court of Justice. Do I make myself clear?"

And that, as the world may now learn for the first time, is how Norman Shane won the first round in the great game he was playing—a game so soon to become deadly and terrible.

I must add just one word more, because it was so beautiful and true.

Lord Auckland, taking his leave, tried one parting shot.

"Tomorrow, Your Majesty, will see many a heart-broken Englishman."

"That may well be, my lord," said the King stoutly, and his eyes flashed. "But tomorrow will also see countless thousands of Englishmen looking to the future with hope and faith and thanks to the living God! And I shall be among them. For you, my lord, and those who lurk behind your back forgot one thing—I, thank heaven, am also an Englishman!"

That was all. The rest is history.

It will be interesting to keep these stories in mind—and when the happy event of the war's end occurs, see how close Mr. Keynes has come to the facts. Another story in the series will appear next month.



A drama of the tall timber.

The Titans of

PUSHING his luck hard while it lasted, Matt was trailing ore sign up the hill-creek in Boone Head—sloshing through the shallows and over the bars.

The green glints in the riffles, the crystals in the gravel, the yellow tint in side pools where the mineral met the tannic acid of rotting leaves, told him that a good-sized lode of "green ore" lay somewhere on up the stream, in the bowl-like hollow.

A timberman like his father, with trees in his blood, Matt ordinarily cared little about ores or prospecting. He had been sent down from St. Louis a month ago to cruise the virgin woods of the Head and plan the logging, and this ore discovery was an accident, on his last day there. He had struck his tent and packed his gear and walked up the creek to say good-bye to a grove of great old oaks; and had noticed the mineral sign only then.

The Head was less than four miles deep; he knew he could locate the lode in a couple of hours, if he met no trouble—if the party out yonder in the woods, following him up the stream, would let him alone.

Just turned twenty-seven, Matt had the toughness of eight outdoor years in his big frame. Since leaving school at his father's death, he had cruised in the Cumberlands, the Superior hills and the Rockies—following trails his dad had taken and learning his profession in the hard-knock way. Old timbermen called him "*this* Matt Vailey," to distinguish the generations. He had the stubborn jaw and unhandsome face of Matt Vailey I, the same earnest, smoky-brown eyes, and same fighting devotion to the American forest.

The sun had dropped behind the west rimrock, and the first hush of evening was creeping into the woods. Matt wished the dark would hurry so that he could shake off the party watching him. He intended to locate the lode by moonlight and flashlight, get the data he needed, get out to Lime Rock that night and be back in St. Louis tomorrow. There the

lode would be a club in his fight with Culp and Coulson, the lumber company which owned Boone Head and had sent him to cruise it. A club to save the irreplaceable old woods of the hollow.

In a grove of huge moss-cup oaks on the east side of the creek, a fox-squirrel started barking. Matt slowed down, suspiciously, and glanced out through the aisles of the great trees. The barking sounded off-color, like a man signaling.

Down the hollow another squirrel started up. Then a third, on above.

Sweat beaded Matt's face as he listened. During the past month he had been watched many times, but always by just one person. Out there now were three, and they had him boxed. It hinted that something special might be afoot that evening. That the local hostility to Matt Vailey might have come to a head.

What the hill people of that upper valley had against him Matt couldn't guess. They were a silent folk—the Otleys, Boones, Dentons, Tollivers. At first he had thought that the hostility was merely their way toward any stranger. Then he wondered if it was somehow connected with the Boone girl, Alicia. He'd gone to the Boone place almost daily to buy milk, eggs and garden stuff; and it might be that damaging lies about him had been circulated by the young hill-farmer, Shelby, who was jealously in love with the girl.

But neither guess seemed big enough to account for the enmity which had met him on all sides and grown and hardened. He didn't know how to account for it. The thing had him mystified.

AS he looked at the grove of huge oaks across the creek, feeling the great age of them and their stark bigness, it seemed strange to Matt that the lives of such vast old things should be lying in his hands. They dwarfed him to ground-squirrel size. They made him feel born just yesterday. There were less than forty in that ancient company, but they covered ten

"You've got to get away," said Alicia.

by William Byron Mowery

Boone Head

acres of the creek bottom. They had been respectable trees when Columbus came to the New World. Their trunks went up seventy feet without a branch, and their high crowns, thin and gnarled, had been tested by the storms of centuries.

Now they were going to be sacrificed in a lumber-company quarrel, along with the other fine old stances of the Head. Not that the timber in there would net much for Culp and Coulson. The Head was so rocky and gully-cut that the logging costs would almost equal the value of the timber. Culp and Coulson knew this. They were cutting the timber merely to win a round in a petty trade war with two other companies.

To Matt, this desecration was something to fight about. To him, the oak grove was as unique as an old cathedral and rare as a Mona Lisa. And the Head had other virgin stands of the great American trees—the walnut and painted beech, the elm and sugar maple. Now, suddenly, the green-ore lode gave him something to fight with. In St. Louis old Dewey Helving, a friend of his dad's and a mining-machinery man, would buy the Head if this lode made it a sound investment. He'd buy, lift the ore out, and the old groves would live. . .

A mile above the oaks Matt came to a rock gorge leading down from the west slope. In the whippoorwill dusk he saw heavy color in the gorge streamlet. He examined the creek-bed above and saw none—and came back to the gorge. As he looked up the laurel-choked trough, he knew that the lode—cave deposit or outcropping—was up there somewhere, only a few minutes away.

Casually he walked off to wait for the dark. In a grove of walnuts and beeches across the creek he built a small supper fire and got some grub out of his rucksack. He figured that the fire would lull the watchfulness of the three men and he could fade away from it as soon as dark fell.

The fox squirrels, he noticed, had become hoot owls. The hooting got on his nerves. But he was hungry,

and he ate a big meal of the Boones' sugar-cured bacon, cheese, and bread that Alicia had baked.

As he lit a pipe afterward, a man walked out of a spice-bush thicket and approached him, a dog at his heels and carbine in the crook of his arm. In the opposite direction a twig snapped. Matt got up slowly, glancing around for cover to jump to, and saw a third man cutting him off from the creek.

THE three came up to the fire, and Matt recognized them. One was a roving ginseng hunter. Another was a mild old tie-hacker, Peter Otley, toting his muzzle-loading squirrel gun, powder-horn and cap pouch. The third was the young farmer, Guy Shelby, who had been trying for several years to marry Alicia Boone.

Shelby's eyes were hard and dangerous. "I guess, Vailey," he said, "we mebbe better tie you up till the balance has come. Thataway you won't make no break, and I'd have to shoot you."

Matt looked from gun to gun, weighing whether to fight or give in. Rebellion at being a prisoner surged all through him. He knew he was personally in danger—facing an unknown charge; but mostly he rebelled because he desperately needed every hour just then if he was to stop Culp and Coulson from moving a sawmill unit into the hollow.

But he stood no chance against the three rifles, and he took the hard way of wisdom. He gave in.

"You're calling the turn, Shelby," he said, wondering what this capture would develop into. "What do you mean, 'till the balance has come?'"

Shelby took rawhide rope from his leather jacket. "You'll be seeing dreckly," he said.

They made Matt sit down against a sapling and tied his hands behind him, back of the tree. Matt noticed that Shelby was wanting him to make a break so that he could be shot down. Shelby's enmity was narrow and personal, and the man was definitely dangerous. But the other two were



Illustrated by Roy Besser



kindly. Old Peter put his bandana around Matt's wrists to keep the rawhide from cutting them.

They built up his supper fire and sat on a log, talking. In a few minutes two more men, small farmers like Shelby, drifted in casually, with lanterns and a coon dog. By full dark a dozen others had appeared, three with their wives. Then Foster Boone came, with his niece Alicia.

An old-line family with a better than average farm, the Boones were distant relatives of the famous Indian-fighter, and they had a pioneer flavor about them. Their farm grew most of what they ate and wore. A widower of forty-five, with several children, Foster Boone was a leader in that upper valley. Alicia was keeping house for him, after a year at some local college.

Foster Boone came over to the sapling, nodded to Matt and smoked a minute deliberately. Finally he said: "A square deal is ever' man's right, Vailey, and we aim on giving you the squarest we know how. No one person should decide judgment on another; it should be done by many, and solemn. Whatever is voted ag'inst you here tonight will be the judgment of us all."

It came home to Matt that this gathering was a trial—he was to be tried by these people on the unknown charge against him. In a general way he knew that the verdict would be serious; the hostility of these folk had been piling up for a month and was a massive thing. He thought of this and a chill went through him. He thought of the old trees and his helplessness made him curse.

But he did feel that Foster Boone and the others were trying to play

"A square deal is ever' man's right, Vailey," said Foster Boone.

fair. They had none of Shelby's personal violence. However crude and illegal this "trial" might be, it had the spirit of justice, the wish to do right. It was no Gestapo spirit.

He wanted to ask Foster Boone what stood against him, but he had no minutes to waste. There were signs that the trial was about to get under way, and he was thinking about escape. His eyes went to Alicia Boone, who was talking with the other three women. He was wondering why she had come—wondering if she might help him. Except that she was a woman, with a woman's compassion, he had no reason to believe she might. But it was a chance.

AS Foster Boone left him, he watched Alicia and tried to catch her eye. She was a medium-tall girl of twenty-three, serene, self-contained with chestnut hair, an attractive body and features that were pretty enough; and Matt had admired the efficient way she kept her uncle's house. But somehow she had left him altogether indifferent. She was *too* serene. She seemed to have no fire or daring.

He finally caught her attention, and with a motion of his head he tried to tell her that he wanted a word with her alone. She plainly understood, for she shook her head, "No."

Matt swore at himself for thinking the girl would betray her uncle and these others for him, just a stranger. Even if she wanted to help him, how could she possibly do it? He was tied to a tree, in the fire glow; nearly twenty men kept glancing his way; and back at the shadow's edge Guy

Shelby was watching them both, with burning eyes.

The moon had swung up over the east rimrock, and the wan light of it was sifting down through the old walnuts and beeches. Matt heard the hooting of owls from snag and cliff, the faint moon-song of an olive-back thrush, the lisp of flying squirrels gliding from high limb to distant tree-trunk. Over at his left a walnut tree was alive with big luna moths, laying their eggs on the foliage. Their white bodies and the slow flapping of their long, tailed wings made them look like a troupe of elfin folk at some ecstatic dance.

But above the sounds, odors and night beauty of the virgin woods he was hearing the whine of a saw-mill, and cursing.

When this timber fell, there would be no moon-song, no lunas dancing in the moonlight.

He happened to be looking at the fire when it exploded, with a big pouff and a flash of dull red. It seemed to jump up in the air and scatter fifty ways, throwing red streaks out through the dark. The air was full of dirt, leaves, smoke. Lanterns went rolling across the moss. Matt was smacked against the sapling by a sharp air blow. He heard a woman scream. Men swore; dogs yelped.

Then he felt a knife sliding along his wrists. His hands were suddenly free and a girl was whispering:

"The brush—this way—quick!"

Matt jumped up, and he asked no questions. Alicia's hand was on his arm, and they ran. They reached the first buckbrush while the dirt and leaves were still falling around them. Matt plowed into the brush, pulling Alicia along after him. Beyond the

thicket they stumbled over a windfall log, and both fell. They sat against the log, getting their breath back.

Alicia placed a flashlight in Matt's hands. She was breathing fast, but her voice was cool and steady. "Swing down to the creek trail and get out of this hollow. Then you can make it on to Lime Rock. I'll get back to the others before they miss me and know I helped you get away."

Matt demanded, "That explosion—how'd you manage it?"

"With old Peter's powder-horn."

"Good Lord!" He stared at the dark shapely head beside him. At the girl who had no fire or daring; at serene Alicia Boone! He said: "I didn't think you would turn a hand. Why did you?"

"Because I felt you were being blamed for something not your fault. I didn't know but what the talk and the verdict might swing to something terribly serious for you. Now you've got to go."

Matt said, "But I can't go yet." He stood up and gave her his hand to rise. "I've got a job to finish, here in the Head. It'll only take an hour—"

"You don't have an hour! You don't have ten minutes! If you don't go now, you won't get out of here alive. If they catch up with you again, you'll be shot."

MATT shook his head stubbornly. He had to make sure the lode was of mine size. The naked word of a Matt Vailey would be enough with old Dewey Helving, but for that very reason he could not go to old Dewey without being positive.

He explained hurriedly: "Look. Up that rock gorge, there's a green-ore lode I've got to see. I'm using it to pull Boone Head out of the fire. This old timber may be trees to you people and lumber to Culp and Coulson, but it's considerable more to me. I'm fighting to save it, with that lode."

He saw Alicia stiffen with shock. In the dim light he saw bewilderment spread over her face. She stared at him, lips parted.

"You—you're trying to save this timber?" she finally stammered.

"That's what I said. I haven't got time to tell you the story. Point me the direction of that gorge mouth, and then get back to the others."

Alicia did not move. She looked back toward the grove where Foster Boone's voice was quieting the confusion. She looked at Matt again, thinking hard.

Then she said, "I'm going with you up that gorge!" He saw her eyes shining. It was exultation and the challenge of danger, and it was also something bigger than these. Bigger than herself and him. "I'm going along!"

Matt objected sharply. "No!" He was thinking of the trouble it would

bog this girl in, with her Uncle Foster and the other families. "I can't let you."

"I'm not asking your let!" She had a will as stubborn as his. "Come on!" She tugged at his arm. "Matt! Hurry it!"

They headed for the gorge across the creek—through the moon-shadows and the patches of moonlight on the moss.

Up in the laurel-choked gorge they stood at the mouth of a cave and listened back toward the creek. Alicia said:

"That young Walker of Guy Shelby's will trail men sometimes. Your rucksack is back there, with your scent on it. Guy may get Cooner to track you."

They did not hear the Walker or any indication they were being followed. Matt asked:

"What would you say they're up to, Leesha?"—he used the name her uncle called her. It fitted her better than the dainty "Alicia."

She said: "I think they aim on blocking the hollow down there where it narrows, at the upper edge of the big oaks. They've got enough men to stretch a cordon across. Matt, I don't believe we can get through that."

"We'll meet that trouble when it comes. Let's first see what we've got back in here."

The mouth of the cave was a narrow slit, of the fissure type. A stream of water flowed out, over a bed that was covered with green waving tufts. Matt looked at Alicia's shoes. "I've got boots on," he said. "You carry the flash and I'll carry you." He picked her up and started back

through the fissure, into the dead air and the silence.

The entrance widened, and Matt finally set Alicia down at the edge of a large cavern of undefined shape. They flashed the light around.

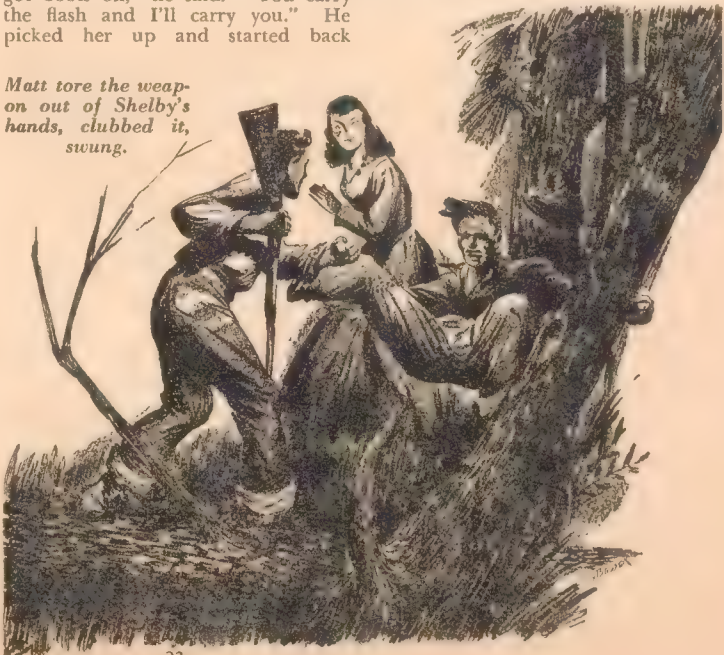
The walls were a grayish brown but the stalagmites were green. The uneven floor, which had the appearance of frozen waves, held pools of crystal-clear water. At the far range of their light they dimly saw tunnels, recesses and a big stumpage of the green stalagmites.

NOT daring to explore much without a guide cord, they followed the stream halfway across the main hall till a big deep pool stopped them. Matt could see better from there. He could see all he needed to. The place had once been a large limestone cave, in the earth's yesterday, and most of it had been filled in by intrusive green ore, flowing up from some molten source. Tentacles of the ore reached back into the hill in several directions. A wave of relief and thankfulness came over Matt as he stared around. The deposit was of commercial size, beyond any question. Now he could honorably tell old Dewey Helving to buy the Head.

"That is," he thought, "if I can get out of this hollow. If I can get past the cordon and Shelby and the man-trailing Walker."

He said to Alicia: "I don't want you to think I'm double-crossing the company I work for. Last evening I went in to Lime Rock and phoned them in St. Louis. I spent three hours on

Matt tore the weapon out of Shelby's hands, clubbed it, swung.



long distance, arguing costs and begging them not to cut this timber. It wound up with Horace Culp firing me. So I'm a free agent. They had to have their pound of flesh, and it's going to cost 'em this mine!"

Alicia said, "Good heavens, you actually got fired because you were defending this grove!"

Matt didn't know exactly what she meant. He said: "That's how it was. But it doesn't matter. I'm going into the Army in a few days. If I know that these groves are still here, safe and sound, and I can come back to them—that's what matters. Let's be going."

After gathering a few ore-samples, they hurried back out of the cave.

MATT saw the first of the huge oaks, just ahead, limned against the north sky. The creek-bottom woods around them were dark and silent. He stopped, whispering to Alicia:

"The best way to get through this cordon is to bust through. To run it. If you're sure that you can square yourself with your Uncle Foster, as you say, I'll leave you here and go for it."

Alicia whispered back: "They'd hear you, and you'd have half a dozen of them shooting at you. We've got to slip through silent. We'll listen here and try to locate the men along this stretch. If we know where they are, we can slip in between."

They crouched down, watching and listening. In a few minutes they saw a dark figure passing along in front of them, two rods away. Alicia nudged Matt.

"That's Guy Shelby."

Matt nodded. Shelby had the dog on a leash and was patrolling to pick up their trail when they came down the hollow.

They waited till he was safely past. Seeing none of the other men, they left the rocks and crept on, keeping to the shadows and thickets.

They got through one thicket without noise, and reached the first of the moss-cup oaks. It was slow and time-wasting, this hands-and-knees, and Matt was impatient with it. He knew that Shelby was coming back and would cross their trail. But he listened to Alicia's caution, and they crept on slowly. They crept on till they reached the middle of the grove and knew that they were through the line of watchers.

Then they got up and went faster, circling a boulder area to strike the creek trail beyond. Matt kept glancing back, afraid of Shelby and the dog that trailed men. He was afraid that Shelby would shoot them both if the man caught up with them.

From several things which Alicia had said in the hectic past hour, he had pieced together the explanation

of these people's hostility, and it left him a little dumfounded, like the explosion of old Peter's powder-horn. He wondered that he hadn't seen it long ago. It had been there all the time, big and plain. So plain that he had passed it up and looked for deeper reasons. In a general way he had known that the Head was precious to these folk of the upper valley. They came to it to hunt coon and fox, wild bees, pawpaws and rare woods herbs. It was a sanctuary from which game spread out to the surrounding country. They had shielded it from fires; they had driven off wild-cat saw-mills and other threats. Above all, it was an abiding wilderness at their doors, untouched and timeless. They could step into it and be walking with Boone and the Pawnee.

Then he had come there to cruise the Head and they had looked on him as the vanguard of its ruination. They had nearly hanged him as a threat to its old timber, and the Culp and Coulson Company had fired him for defending just that.

He said to Alicia: "Your Uncle Foster is going to be a very astonished man when he finds out the facts about this—about the crossfire I was caught in. I would like to be around—"

Alicia stopped him: "The point right now is that they don't know those facts and wouldn't listen; they'd think you were spinning lies about that getting fired and all; and you'll be a very dead man if they catch us."



At the lower edge of the oak grove they came to the creek trail. As they swung into it they ran squarely into a man waiting for them; a man, dog, and moon-glint on gun steel.

Alicia saw the carbine come up, to kill Matt. She cried: "Guy! Don't!" and flung herself between Matt and the gun.

Matt swept her aside with his arm, out of danger. It took something harder than a girl's words to stop Shelby, and he had it. He had been carrying it in his hand in case he and Alicia ran into one of the men. It was a chunk of the green ore. He slammed it at Shelby and leaped in.

The dornick caught Shelby in the face. The carbine muzzle jerked up. Then Matt was grabbing the gun barrel. The carbine went off, the bullet clipping up through the trees. Matt tore the weapon out of Shelby's hands, clubbed it, swung, and laid Shelby out cold on the path.

Alicia took the gun. "You've got to get away, Matt. They heard that shot and they'll be down here. I can stop them and give you a few extra minutes."

"How about yourself, girl?"

"They won't shoot me. Don't worry about the rest of it. I can square myself with Uncle Foster. Especially if you come back from St. Louis with the proof of what I tell them."

Matt took her hands. "I'll do that! Before I go into the Army I'll come back here with this woods in my pocket."

Alicia pulled her hands away. Her eyes were shining with the triumph she and Matt had gained, but she was more practical than he. She urged: "Hurry! Go! Please, Matt!"

Matt went a few steps down the path. Then he stopped and looked back. Alicia Boone was standing in a shaft of moonlight with the huge oaks behind her. As he regarded her, she was more than his incredibly efficient partner through a bad hour, and more than a girl with moon-sheen in her hair. She was the girl with whom he wanted to live his life, or with no one. And this was because she had shown him a brave heart that night and they had both risked their lives for something bigger than themselves.

HE went back and took Alicia forcibly into his arms. He tilted her head so that the moon was full on her face. They kissed, and it was like nothing Matt had ever imagined as the end to his Boone Head cruise. He felt the answering squeeze of Alicia Boone's arms; then she was pushing him from her again.

"Matt! Go!"

"I'll be back!"

"I'll be here!"

Matt turned and broke into a run.

WE'RE IN THIS WITH RUSSIA

New light on our sometimes misunderstood allies in this war.

by Wallace Carroll

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HOW will Russia fit into the post-war settlement? Will Stalin try to create a Soviet Europe when the war is won? Will he return to the old ideal of the world revolution? Will the United States, Great Britain and the other western powers be able to deal with Russia after the war? And what kind of policy will America have to pursue toward the Soviets?

The day I received instructions to leave my post in London and go to Moscow these questions were only vague wonderings at the back of my mind. It was late in July, 1941, and there were more urgent matters to be considered. The Germans were already in Smolensk, less than two hundred and fifty miles from the Soviet capital, and were advancing swiftly on Leningrad in the north and Kiev and Odessa in the south. No foreign correspondent had ever been permitted to see the Red Army in action. The United Press wanted me to make every effort to reach the Russian front and then answer the questions America was asking at the moment: How strong is the Red Army? How strong is the Stalin government? How long will the Soviets be able to hold the Germans?

This was my assignment, but as I carried it out and saw the strength of the Soviet resistance, the deeper questions began to move forward in my mind. Perhaps it will seem strange to you that a reporter in the midst of a great war should trouble himself about the problems of an eventual peace, especially when the war was far from won. You may doubt that a newspaperman ever reflects at all—I sometimes wonder myself. But during my twelve years in Europe I had seen how the last peace was lost. My job was diplomatic reporting. I sat in the press galleries and prowled the corridors of conferences on disarmament

and conferences on rearmament. I was there when diplomats gathered around the green-covered table in Geneva, London, Paris, Montreux, Brussels, and Evian. When a Yugoslav king was assassinated, when Hitler won his first international victory in the Saar, when two South American nations refused to stop the war in the steaming jungles of the Chaco, I followed the deliberations of the statesmen. I followed them, too, down the road which led from China through Ethiopia, Spain, and Czechoslovakia to Danzig and Poland.

Thus without conscious effort on my part, I acquired an interest in the mechanism of peace. And as the Soviet Union came forward in the rôle of a champion of peace, I became more and more interested in the effect of its policies on the delicate combination of pressure valves and balances which governed the whole mechanism.

During the years in which I pursued the diplomatic circus around Europe, I had become more and more conscious of a weakness in my equipment. I saw the magic of Litvinov and the other Soviet diplomats but I knew little of what lay behind it. Whether the influence of the Soviet Union was for good or for evil, I was convinced that it could not be ignored. I therefore jumped at the chance to visit that little-known country about which opinions were so contradictory. . . .

AMERICA AND RUSSIA

A POWERFUL nation which will work for a long period of peace cannot be ignored or treated with hostility by the United States. For the United States, too, will want a stable peace. Here America and the Soviet Union find a common interest, an interest of such paramount importance that it

may well override their differences, including the ideological one.

The events of December 7, 1941, shook the deep-seated American belief that peace could be had by staying at home and minding your own business. A number of other nations had learned that lesson in the previous months and years. Their experience and that of the United States seems to show that peace needs to be organized as well as war. Peace requires far-sighted planning, coördination of effort, and mutual sacrifice—though not so great a sacrifice as war. Peace needs its general staffs and its liaison officers. It needs every Chinese, every Indian, every Frenchman, every Englishman—and every Russian and American, too—who can be rallied to its cause.

There is another lesson to be drawn from the peace that was lost. The peace-loving nations cannot afford to refuse the coöperation of any country which will sincerely work for peace. A country barred from the council table becomes a force for mischief and instability. Snubbed by the Paris Conference, the Soviets took a stand against the Versailles settlement and kept the former Allies in fear of a Russo-German combination which would upset the peace treaties. The Soviets, of course, were largely responsible for their own isolation in those early years. Much as they needed peace and stability for their internal development, they mistakenly thought they had a greater stake in social upheaval. But even after they came out squarely for peace and stability they were not welcomed in the conference halls of Europe. The League of Nations admitted them with ill-grace in 1934 and the British and French governments thereupon became more and more inclined to settle the issue of war and peace outside the League. The Spanish Civil War was dealt with by the Non-Intervention Committee, in

HIGH LIGHTS OF THE NEW BOOKS

which the Soviets formed a minority of one. The fate of Czechoslovakia was settled by the Munich Conference, at which the Soviets did not even have a watching brief. Threatened with isolation and eventual aggression, their efforts for peace ignored, the Soviets acted to protect themselves. They made a pact with Germany, and the Second World War began.

Then the nations which had spurned the Soviets as allies for peace discovered suddenly that they needed the Soviet Union as an ally for war. A British government, to all appearances, had tried to bring about the destruction of the Soviet régime. But when France fell, Winston Churchill knew that Britain could not possibly win without Soviet aid and, swallowing his personal dislikes, he sought it. Little Holland had refused to establish diplomatic relations with the Soviets, but what chance would there be of reestablishing an independent Holland in our lifetime if the Red Army had not held the Germans in 1941? So all the little nations which had often snubbed the Soviets awoke to the fact that their future depended upon the resistance of the despised Bolsheviks.

America, too, had discovered that the Soviet Union was a worth-while ally. The Soviets, for their part, had known all along that America was an ally to be valued—not only for war but for peace. When the Disarmament Conference held its last plenary session in May, 1934, Litvinov proposed that it transform itself into a permanent peace conference. The United States and the Soviet Union were members of the Disarmament Conference but neither, at that time, was a member of the League. If the conference closed, as it was about to do, the peace mechanism of Geneva would lose the support of two great peace-loving powers. Litvinov therefore wanted to prolong the conference in a new form so that the United States and the Soviet Union could at all times concert their efforts with other peaceful nations. His proposal, like so many others he made, was looked upon as "just another Litvinov stunt."

WHAT would be the alternative to accepting Soviet coöperation for peace?

The United States is determined to inflict a decisive defeat on Germany and Japan. No one believes that when that aim is achieved all the peoples of the world will fall into each other's arms and live happily ever after. That would be the ideal outcome but it is out of the question. The people who have been bombed and plundered will not be quick to welcome the vanquished back to the international

brotherhood. For a time at least, Germany and Japan will be pariah nations. Will it then be possible to make a pariah of the Soviet Union too? And will each pariah sulk by himself or will the three join hands and make pariahs of the rest of us?

Or suppose that the war should end in a stalemate with Japan or Germany, or both, undefeated. Where would the United Nations find a counterpoise for Germany in Europe and Japan in the Far East? Only the enlistment of Soviet strength on the side of peace could give the world something better than a brief, uneasy armistice.

The truth is that so far as we can see today there is no alternative to coöperation with the Soviet Union. And as a matter of fact none of the United Nations is seeking an alternative. The Soviets not only want a stable peace but need it as much as any power. This time it will be impossible to exclude them from the peace conference and from the other councils which will shape the post-war world. Their presence at these meetings will, in fact, be a guarantee against their interference in the internal affairs of other nations, for Soviet coöperation with other powers with the benefits it brings to the Soviet Union will be possible only if the Russians refrain from revolutionary activity abroad.

America, too, will play her part in these gatherings. Try as she may, she will not be able to escape it. With the Soviet Union and with Britain, the United States will have to provide the leadership to carry the world through the difficult post-war period. A dwindling number of Americans may still find it distasteful, but America is on the road with Russia.

The autocracy of the Czars, horrified by the American Revolution, refused at first to recognize the young republic of the West. The American colonials had denied the divine right of kings. They were conducting a dangerous experiment and, of course, it was doomed to fail. Catherine the Great would not receive Francis Dana, whom the United States nominated as its first minister to Russia. It was only in 1809, thirty-three years after the Declaration of Independence that the Czar Alexander I yielded and received the first American envoy, John Quincy Adams. Russia was the last great power to recognize the United States.

The United States, in turn, was the last great power to recognize the Soviet Union. The Soviets denied the sacred right of private property. They were conducting a dangerous experiment and, of course, it was doomed to fail.

Ludwig Martens, the first Soviet envoy to the United States, was deported in 1920. American relief missions went to Russia during the famine and American engineers helped carry out the first five-year plan, but the United States government refused to recognize the Soviets. It treated them, in fact, with unexampled rudeness and contempt. Then in 1933 President Roosevelt established diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. One of his motives was apprehension over the situation in the Far East, where the Japanese had already started on their career of conquest. Here America and the Soviet Union had a common interest.

ONCE relations were established between the young American Republic and the autocracy of the Czars, they were strangely cordial. Although the ideological differences between them were deep, they had one great identical interest—their most dangerous enemy was Great Britain. The Czar's government followed sympathetically the American efforts in the War of 1812, even when Russia was absorbed in her struggle against Napoleon, and in 1822 Alexander I arbitrated the British and American claims arising from the war. American sympathies were with the Russians in the Crimean War because they were fighting the British. A few years later, during the American Civil War, Alexander II sent a Russian naval squadron to New York and another to San Francisco. He was acting out of self-interest, because if Britain attacked Russia, as he feared she would, these ships would have been bottled up in Russian ports and destroyed. His action, however, proved of great benefit to the North. It helped to deter the British from establishing a blockade of Northern ports and it secured San Francisco Harbor from attack by the Confederate cruisers *Sumter* and *Alabama*. The United States government was grateful and reciprocated by refusing to participate in an international protest against Russian treatment of the Poles. Two years after the Civil War, it also pleased the Czar's government by buying Alaska, which the Russians knew they could not defend against a possible British attack from Canada.

At the end of the nineteenth century, Russia had gained so strong a position in China that America became concerned. The United States government backed Japan in the events leading up to the Russo-Japanese War and took charge of Japanese interests in Russia during the war. Japan's overwhelming and unexpected victories, however, threatened to upset the balance of power in the Far East, and President Theodore Roosevelt hastened to reverse his policy. At the Portsmouth Conference, he used

his influence to moderate the Japanese demands and thus obtained reasonable peace terms for the Russians. The old cordiality returned to Russian-American relations.

This friendliness between the Russian autocracy and the American Republic is one of many examples which show that friendship and collaboration are possible between nations of differing ideologies. What they need is a common interest. But, it may be objected, the United States was not trying to foment revolution in Czarist Russia. That is true, but were the fears of Catherine the Great entirely groundless? Any country which gives its citizens more freedom and a higher standard of living than other countries puts revolutionary forces into motion. Those forces may take a long time to produce their effect in backward countries. The forces behind the American and French Revolutions are, in fact, just beginning to be felt in some parts of the world. . . .

It could be argued that every immigrant who "made good" in America was an agent for revolution in the country from which he came. The news of his success and of the liberty he enjoyed in America must have made his old neighbors in Europe more conscious of their own lack of opportunity. When that Finnish woman whom I met in the Moscow subway writes to her old neighbors in Minnesota that she is happier in Russia, that she has all the freedom Americans know plus the deeper freedom which flows from greater economic equality, that she has no fear of want because the good things of life are so plentiful—then Americans may begin to worry about a communist revolution.

That time, as I have pointed out, is far away. Even if the fondest dreams of the Soviet leaders are realized, they will not be able to match the per capita output of the United States for twenty-five years, at the very least. And if they are to set an effective revolutionary example to the United States they must show convincingly that they can govern forever after without the ministrations of the secret police. For a country which has always had a secret police that step will be hard to take. Thus, so far as revolution by example is concerned, the American of today need fear nothing from Russia. Provided, of course, that America faces the political and economic problems of the post-war era with courage and resolution.

BUT what about the Comintern? Here we turn from revolution by example to revolution by propaganda and incitement.

"Propaganda doesn't do anything," said Stalin in an interview with Walter Duranty. "Constitutions and systems are changed by natural causes,

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not by talk or books. In the old days the Czars blamed the French or German socialists for importing socialism into Russia, forgetting that the conditions of life and not propaganda determine the course of events. Now I suppose they are making the same mistake in the United States when they say we are reexporting socialism to Europe."

The Comintern (also known as the Communist International and Third International) likes to regard itself as the "general staff of the world revolution." It has its headquarters in Moscow, partly because it has nowhere else to go. There the activities of the sixty-five communist parties of the world are coordinated by representatives of all or most of them. For many years the governments of other countries were inclined to hold the Soviet government responsible for the sins of the Comintern. Most of them have now abandoned this position. In practice, as long as the Soviet Union is the only socialist country the Comintern will be dominated by its Soviet members and will make its activities conform to Soviet policy. And as long as the Soviet Union remains the only socialist country the Comintern will be assured of a home in Moscow, if only as a symbol of Soviet belief in an eventual world revolution.

The idea of a general staff coordinating the activities of communists throughout the world looks formidable at first sight, but it does not seem to have done the communists much good in practice. By following the Comintern line at various stages of the war, communists in the western countries have been brought into greater disrepute than ever. One day the head of the Communist Party in England was endorsing the war as a crusade against fascism, the next he was condemning it as an imperialist war. One day American communists were opposing lease-lend aid to the enemies of Hitler, the next they could not have enough of it. These changes of attitude may be understood by a communist intellectual who has mastered Lenin's doctrine of revolutionary defeatism, but they can hardly be grasped by the man who runs a lathe in a Milwaukee or Pittsburgh factory. It just seems to him that his communist friends are turning flip-flops on orders from a bunch of foreigners.

Thus there are occasions when the Comintern can do a distinct disservice to the cause of communism in America. It is obviously difficult—if not impossible—for a group of people in Moscow, many of them completely unacquainted with American conditions, to direct revolutionary activities in the United States. On the face of it, the

American opponents of communism could ask nothing better.

The men who dominate the Comintern may now realize this. The Comintern is working hard for the collapse of Hitlerism in all the German-controlled countries, but it has been put on a leash so far as America is concerned. The same holds true for Britain. The American and British communists I saw in Moscow looked and acted like men on the dole facing a long period of unemployment. They had not had much to do since June 22, 1941. As long as the Soviet Union values American and British cooperation they may be kept in this state of suspended animation—and that will probably be a long time.

THIS does not mean that American communists will suspend their activities, American communists, or their equivalent, would exist even if there were no Comintern and no Soviet government. They will undoubtedly go on working for communism with the devotion and persistence which are the characteristics of communists in all countries. American communists, however, are not a Soviet-American affair. They are Americans with all the rights and duties of Americans and are subject to American law. If they are dealt with in accordance with that law, the Soviet government will raise no objections and shed no tears. Chiang Kai-shek slaughtered thousands of Chinese communists, but Stalin continued to help him against the Japanese.

Not that I am advocating that kind of treatment for American communists or anything like it. Far from it. The czarist police hounded the communists more ruthlessly and perhaps more efficiently than the American police will ever be able to do. They beat them, tortured them, exiled them, shot them, and still the Bolsheviks won. It does no good to attack the symptoms of a disease.

American red-baiters may well heed that example. If communism ever becomes a danger to the present American system it will not be because of the activities of the Comintern or of the American communists. It will be because a large proportion of the American people may some day feel that they have been denied their economic and social rights. Stalin may have had his tongue in his cheek when he said that propaganda doesn't do anything—the Soviets do not neglect the art of propaganda—but he was talking sense when he said that the conditions of life determine the course of events. The most effective "communists" I know in America are not the wide-eyed intellectuals or so-called labor

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agitators. They are the paunchy men who want to turn the clock back to 1929, that golden era of booming stock markets, fat profits—and ten or twelve million unemployed. If these men have their way in the post-war years, anything may happen to the United States.

Even then, however, the odds are against communism. A rich and powerful nation which shrinks from its social and economic problems is not likely to turn communist. It is much more probable that it will succumb to fascism, that manifold disease whose symptoms are aggressiveness in an unsatisfied country and moral defeatism in a tired, sated country.

AS one who has seen communism at work in a number of countries and fascism triumphing in others, I do not believe for a moment, however, that America's choice is limited to communism and fascism. This country is so rich in material wealth and above all in the skill and resourcefulness of its people that if it marches forward resolutely it can go on for many years without fear of either ideology. By courageously meeting the problems of the post-war world, by establishing greater social and economic equality for all classes and races, America can preserve her democracy for decades to come. The choice before America is more democracy, not less. The American Revolution, too, is a continuing revolution.

With the common objective of a stable peace, the United States and the Soviet Union seem destined to cooperate in the post-war era, and this cooperation entails no danger to the American system of government. The United States does not have to sacrifice any principles or condone anything it dislikes in the Soviet system.

But won't it be difficult to cooperate with the Soviets? Aren't they even more dishonest than those other shifty Europeans? Won't they repudiate any agreement they make if it suits their purposes? Doesn't their system lend itself to quick and bewildering changes of policy?

How many times have I sat in the assembly hall at Geneva and seen fifty nations, all in a bunch, betray their obligations? Often enough to be convinced that the Soviets do not have a monopoly on perfidy. The sad truth is that nations seldom keep their word when it is inconvenient to do so. Most of the European countries fulfilled their war-debt agreements with the United States only so long as it was to their interest. The British paid one more installment than France and the rest—because it was to Britain's advantage to get the additional goodwill

which resulted from that gesture. The United States respected its financial obligations until it encountered financial difficulties in 1933; then it did not hesitate to repudiate the gold clause in its securities.

The Soviet-German pact, more than anything else, gave many Americans the feeling that the Soviet system is too well adapted to sudden shifts of policy. So, unfortunately, are other systems. In the autumn of 1935 Italy invaded Abyssinia. The British people were for Abyssinia and the League. The Baldwin government detested the League and looked upon Abyssinia as just another potential colony. But in order to win the general election which was approaching, Baldwin had to put his hand on his heart and swear that the League was the apple of his eye. Britain led fifty League members in economic sanctions against Italy. The United States, though not a member of the League, was obliging enough to cooperate by applying an embargo on arms, loans, and credits. The Baldwin government won the election. Then it turned about and in cooperation with the French Prime Minister produced the Hoare-Laval plan which destroyed the League and left fifty members and the United States holding the bag.

Americans need not feel that these sudden shifts are confined to Europe. For Europeans the classic example of the about-face is the American repudiation of the Versailles Treaty. They will never forget that. They will have their doubts about Russia, too, but when the next peace settlement is being negotiated they will be wondering all the time whether America will see it through.

Some Americans, including many American diplomats, feel that the Soviets carry hard bargaining to an extreme. They undoubtedly are hard bargainers, but so are most other nations. The most stubborn bargainer is usually the man with whom you are dealing at the moment. A few years ago the United States blissfully opened negotiations for a trade agreement with Britain. The American negotiators believed that within a very short time they would have one of those accords which were so dear to the heart of Secretary Hull. But our British cousins were not very obliging. The talks proved long and arduous, and before an agreement was reached mutterings about "Oriental bargaining" could be heard coming from the State Department. The British, in turn, felt that the United States drove a very hard bargain in the destroyers-for-bases agreement in 1940, not only by exacting a valuable chain of bases for fifty old destroyers but by impos-

ing conditions of occupancy which hurt the pride of the British colonies.

A nation's foreign policy is shaped by many factors—geography, economic and strategic necessities, the comparative strength and ambitions of other powers, internal politics, tradition. The character and predilections of the men who carry out policy may alter a nation's course for a time, but in the long run these fundamentals will usually tell. In the case of the Soviet Union these factors seem likely to favor a straight-forward foreign policy. The Soviets need no foreign markets—so far they have not even been able to fill the demands of their domestic market. They come nearer to economic self-sufficiency than any other country except the United States. If Germany and Japan are defeated in this war the Soviet Union will be in no danger of attack and therefore will be free from the necessity to resort to shifts like the Soviet-German pact. The great need of the Soviets will be a long period of peace and they will have to seek this in friendly contacts with other powers.

While all this is true, it would be foolish to blink the fact that there are special difficulties in relations with the Soviet Union.

The most serious of these arise from the ideological difference. On the Soviet side this has inspired the fear of the capitalist encirclement and distrust of almost every move made by a capitalist power. On the American side it has tended to magnify divergences which could be easily smoothed out in relations with other nations. Soviet heroism in this war has done a great deal to break down American prejudice. Perhaps American aid and loyal cooperation will dispel some of the distrust on the part of the Soviets.

CZARIST statesmen were inclined to be extremely suspicious—often with good reason. Soviet statesmen are, if anything, even more so. The Soviets, like the czars, are very secretive. This has often made it difficult to deal with them. They are also highly sensitive. After all the snubs they have received these many years, this is understandable. On the other hand Soviet diplomacy has been blunt and hard-boiled, and foreign diplomats have sometimes complained that the sensitive Soviets have not always shown due consideration for the feelings of others.

The art of diplomacy exists to surmount difficulties like these. If two countries have a paramount interest in common, the task of their diplomats is to remove or circumvent the obstacles which stand in the way of cooperation. American diplomacy, which has been growing more sure-footed every year, will know how to maintain a working relationship with a country

whose coöperation is vital for peace. And the Soviets, on their side, will baffle their suspicions for the sake of the benefits to be derived from good relations with America.

It goes without saying that American policy toward the Soviet Union must be realistic and hard-boiled—as hard-boiled as Soviet policy. The Soviets will understand that. What they will not understand is kowtowing and scraping. There will be no need to send a red or pink or mauve ambassador to Moscow; the Soviets would not comb their concentration camps for a czarist banker, fit him out with a new tail-coat, spray him with caude-Cologne, and send him to Washington. The United States government need not compromise with American communists; the Soviet government does not compromise with opponents of the Soviet system within its boundaries. But while being firm, American policy will also have to be fair. America must not demand a higher standard of conduct from the Soviets than it requires from other powers. It must never follow the Chamberlain policy of treating the Soviets as if they were of lesser consequence than Poland, Turkey, and the little Baltic republics.

The nature of America's future policy toward the Soviets has been clearly marked out by the failures of the capitalist countries in their previous relations with the Soviet Union. First they tried to destroy the Soviets by armed force. That failed and, if anyone should be so mad as to try it again it would fail once more: the Soviets would fight as stubbornly against American and British invaders as they have fought against the Germans. Next the capitalist countries tried to ignore the Soviet Union. That policy also failed, and it is even less practicable now than at the time it was attempted. Then the capitalist powers recognized the Soviets but treated them like poor relations. The outcome of that policy was a new world war.

There remains only one course—a policy of equality, carried out with firmness but without condescension or hostility. It will not be easy. It will challenge American statesmanship and the intelligence and good sense of the American people. But it is the only policy which has a chance and it is a policy which may give the world a long period of peace.

In putting so much stress on American relations with the Soviet Union, I do not mean to imply that we can afford to ignore any other peace-loving nation. Least of all can we dispense with the coöperation of that other great ally who stood alone for a year against the greatest military power in history and held the Atlantic to America's everlasting benefit.

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AMERICA'S DESTINY

WHEN all is said, there will be bigger problems for America to face than the adjustment of her relations with Russia. And if these problems inspire awe in some Americans, let them think of the problems which other countries will have to solve—the problems of imperial Britain, the problems of a bewildered France in search of self-respect and lost stature, the problems of a Soviet Union which had hardly emerged from the Middle Ages when it was struck by the scourge of Hitler's new medievalism.

But whether the problems are big or small, America will have to face them. The issues which are shirked in the conference halls of the nations will come home for an answer, not so dramatically, perhaps, as at Pearl Harbor, but in a way which is inescapable. The oceans which were not broad enough in 1941 will be no broader in the world of the future.

It will be a rapidly changing world, a world moving swiftly toward the climax of the revolutionary era which opened in 1917. In Europe, Asia, and Africa, white men, black men, brown and yellow men will be groping their way toward the freedoms which Americans won long ago. The backward millions will not be denied. They will persist. Their ways are not likely to be our ways, but a world which closed its eyes to the cruelty and suffering of the old order will have to accept the cruelty and suffering which are inherent in change. It will be a time to test the understanding and tolerance of Americans and the wisdom of their statesmen.

Change, of course, will not go unchallenged. The forces of reaction will be looking for a new Führer. All those shady elements in all countries which more or less openly hailed Hitler as a bulwark against Bolshevism, as a rampart against change, all those groups and individuals who helped transform an obscure house-painter into a malevolent Colossus bestriding a narrow world, all these will be looking for a new champion. The next time, we may be sure; he will not be a putty-faced man with the mustache of a film comedian. He will need a new front—it may even be a "democratic" front. Americans will have to be vigilant that a Führer of this kind does not in time arise among them.

For America is approaching a crossroads. On the one side is the way of a nation which is fearful of its destiny, which balks at change, which refuses to make an effort of understanding and of tolerance. On the other is the way of leadership, the way of a nation which is conscious of its strength,

which is ready to help the world of which America is a part through a difficult period with a minimum of suffering.

For an America which chooses the first course, there will be many lonely and unhappy years. America will be at the mercy of events, her people bewildered by a world they will not understand, driven from one moral defeat to another until their battle fleet lies rusting at the bottom of a new Pearl Harbor. There can be no more ungrateful rôle than sitting on the lid in a revolutionary era. But for an America which takes the second road new frontiers will be opened. In those lands whose peoples have been denied too long their equal place in the human family there will be fresh opportunities for American intelligence and integrity. American teachers will go forth to combat ignorance, American doctors to fight pestilence, American economists and administrators to overcome want—all helping the awakening peoples of backward lands to come forward and make their contributions to human progress. There will be new outlets for American youth, for American rugged individualism—though not for the armchair "rugged individualists" of the two-car, two-bath-tub, two-radio era. There will be ample scope for American statesmanship in maintaining friendly relations with the new governments which if isolated may be forced into acts of desperation. And in this fateful era the continuing American Revolution may offer an ideal of peaceful and orderly change to a world which is at heart conservative.

SO at least it seems to a reporter who has never carried a hod for any ideology and who has never committed himself to a New Deal or an Old Deal but who believes after all he has seen that there is hope in a Square Deal.

I returned to America with the answers to my questions. They were not so precise or so final as I could have wished, but then they never could be. The appetite grows in the eating.

And perhaps it was only natural that the answers themselves suggested new questions—questions as far-reaching as those at the back of my mind that August day when the *Llanstephan Castle* slipped away from the charred docks of Liverpool and put out to sea on her voyage to Russia. Will America face the test of peace as bravely as she met the shock of war? Will Americans see that they, not others, are the masters of America's fate? Will America go forward confidently to meet her destiny?

Their Own Dear Land



OMAR THE BLACK sighed—and grinned a little too—at the recollection.

"There was Esa, the chief eunuch, yelling at me," he said to his twin brother Omar the Red. "And there was Fathouma, the woman I had, if not loved, then at least left, smiling at me! Ah—I felt like a nut

between two stones. Can you blame me that I sped from the place?"

He described how, with the help of crashing elbows and kicking feet, he bored through the crowd; how at a desperate headlong rush, he hurtled around a corner, a second, a third, seeking deserted alleys, while behind him, men surged into motion.

There was then pursuit, and the chief eunuch's shouts taken up in a savage chorus:

"Stop him!"

"What has he done?"

"Who cares? Did you not hear? A hundred pieces of gold to the man who stops him!"

"Money which I need!"

by *Achmed Abdullah*

Illustrated by
John Richard Flanagan



A Saga of the Two Swordsmen of High Tartary

"No more than I! Money—ah—to be earned by my father's only son!"

Well, Omar the Black had decided, money not to be earned, if he could help it. He was not going to be stopped, and delivered up to the chief eunuch. It would mean one of two things: an unpleasant death or a life even more unpleasant.

For he knew the chief eunuch of old—knew that the latter, who had been fiercely jealous of him during the days of his affluence and influence at the court of the Grand Khan of the Golden Steppe, had always intrigued against him, always detested him, always tried to undermine him. And here, tonight, was Esa's chance.

A chance at bitter toll!

Either—oh, yes!—an unpleasant death or a life yet more unpleasant. Either to be handed over by the eunuch to the Grand Khan; and then—the Tartar considered and shuddered—it would be the tall gallows for him, or the swish of the executioner's blade. Or else—and again he shuddered—his

fate would rest with Fathouma, the Grand Khan's sister.

And—*ai-yai*—the way she had peered at him through the fluttering silk curtains of the litter! The way she had smiled at him! Such a sweet, gentle, forgiving smile! Such a tender smile!

Allah—such a loving smile!

Why—this time she might be less proud, less the great lady. Might insist on carrying out their interrupted marriage-contract. And what then of this other girl, this Gothia? A girl—ah, like the edge of soft dreams—a girl whom he loved madly. . . .

He interrupted his thoughts.

WHAT, he asked himself, as his legs, one sturdy and sound and the other aching rheumatically, gathered speed, was the good in thinking, right now, of Gothia? First he would have to find safety—from the Grand Khan's revenge no less than from Fathouma's mercy. . . .

Faster and faster he ran—then swerved as a man, whom he passed, grabbed his arm and cried:

"Stop, scoundrell!"

Omar shook off the clutching fingers; felled, with brutal fist, another man who stepped square in his path; ran still faster, away from the center of the town, through streets and alleys that were deserted—and that a few moments later, as if by magic, jumped to hectic life.

Lights in dark houses twinkled, exploded with orange and yellow as shutters were pushed up. Heads leaned from windows. Doors opened. The coiling shadows spewed forth people—men as well as women. They came hurrying out of the nowhere, the everywhere.

They came yelling and screeching: "Get him!"

"Stop him!"

"There he goes!"

"After him!"

The pack in full cry—two abreast, three, four, six abreast. Groups, solitary figures!

A lumbering red-turbaned constable, stumbling out of a coffee-shop, wiping his mouth, tugging at his heavy revolver.

Shouted questions. Shouted answers:

"What is it?"

"What has happened?"

"A thief!"

"Nol! A murderer!"

"Three people he slew!"

"Four! I saw it with these eyes!"

"Ah—the foul assassin!"

And sadistic, quivering, high-pitched screams: "Get him!" . . . "Catch him!" . . . "Kill him!"

Ferocious gayety in the sounds. For here was the cruel, perverted thrill of the man-hunt.

"Get him!"

"Kill him!"

"Quick, quick, quick! Around the next corner! Cut him off!"

Swearing, shrieking. Throwing bricks and pots and clubs and stones. *Pop! pop! pop!*—the constable's revolver dropping punctuation marks into the night. And on, on, the sweep of figures. And Omar the Black running, his lungs pounding, his heart beating like a triphammer; darting left, right, left, right—steadily gaining on his pursuers, at last finding temporary refuge at the edge of town, in the old cemetery, among the carved granite tombstones that dreamed of Judgment Day.

There, stretched prone on the ground, he turned his head to watch the mob hurrying on and past on a false trail. He listened to the view-halloo of the chase growing fainter and fainter, finally becoming a mere memory of sound.

Then, slowly, warily, he got up. He looked about. . . . Nobody was within sight.

So he doubled on his tracks and left Gulabad from the opposite direction, hag-ridden by his double fear—of the Grand Khan's revenge and Fathouma's loving tenderness.

To put the many, many miles between himself and this double fear, this double danger—that's what he must do, and as quickly as possible.

His resolve was strengthened by the knowledge that money was sultan in High Tartary as anywhere else in the world; that the tale of the rich reward which had been offered for his capture—a hundred pieces of gold—would be round and round the countryside in no time at all, and so every hand there would be against his, and every eye and ear seeking him out.

Therefore Omar the Black traveled in haste and stealth. At night he traveled, hiding in the daytime, preferring the moors and forests to the open, green fields; taking the deer- and wolf-spoors instead of the honest highways; plunging to the knee—and his rheumatic leg hurting him so—at icy fords rather than using the proper stone bridges that spanned the rivers; avoiding the snug, warm villages where food was plentiful and hearts were friendly. And living—as the Tartar saying has it—on the wind and the pines and the gray rock's lichen!

Footsore he was, and weary; and wishing:

"If only I had a horse!"

A fine, swift horse to take between his two thighs and gallop away. Then ho for the far road, the wild, brazen road, and glittering deeds, glittering fame! Yes—glittering fame it would be for him; and he hacking his way to wealth and power; and presently returning to Gulabad.

No longer a fugitive, with a price on his head and the Grand Khan's revenge at his heel, but a hero, a con-

queror; the equal—by the Prophet the Adored!—to any Khan.

Omar was quite certain of his ultimate success, and for no better or, be-like, no worse reason than that he was what he was: a Tartar of Tartars—the which is a thing difficult to explain with the writing of words to those who do not know our steppes and our hills.

Perhaps it might best be defined by saying that his bravery overshadowed his conceit—or the other way about—that both bravery and conceit were overshadowed by his tight, hard, shrewd strength of purpose, and gilded by his undying optimism. Anyway, whatever it was, he had it. It made him sure of himself; persuaded him, too, that some day Gothia would be his, so sweet and warm and white in the crook of his elbow.

The imagining intoxicated him. He laughed aloud—and a moment later grew unhappy and morose. Only a fool, he told himself, will grind pepper for the bird still on the wing.

Not a bird, in his case, but a horse. A horse was the first thing he had to have for the realization of his stirring plans. Without a horse, these plans were useless, hopeless—as useless and hopeless as trying to throw a noose around the far stars or weaving a rope from tortoise-hair.

Yes, the horse was essential. And how could he find one, here in the lonely wilderness of moor and forest?

Thus, despondent and gloomy, he had trudged on. Night had come; and the chill raw wind, booming out of the Siberian tundras, had raced like a leash of strong dogs; and hunger had gnawed at his stomach; and thirst had dried his throat; and his leg had throbbed like a sore tooth. "Help me, O Allah, O King of the Seven Worlds!" he had sobbed—and as if in answer to his prayer, he had heard a soft neighing, had seen a roan Kabuli stallion grazing on a short halter, had sneaked up noiselessly, had unhobbled the animal and been about to mount. . . . And then:

"By Beelzebub," he said now, angrily, to his twin-brother, "it *had* to be yours!"

Again he sighed.

"Ah," he added, "am I not the poor, miserable one, harried by the hounds of fate!"

OMAR the Red looked up.

"Not poor, surely," he remarked.

"What do you mean—not poor?"

"Unless, in your flight, you lost the jewels which you took from the rich Jew."

Omar the Black jumped up.

"As the Lord liveth," he exclaimed, "I had forgotten them!"

Anxiously he tapped his loose breeches. There was a pleasant tinkle, and a few seconds later a pleasant sight

as he brought out a handful of emeralds and rubies that sparkled in the moon's cold rays.

Then once more he became despondent.

"What good," he asked, "are these jewels to me? As much good as a comb to a bald-headed man. Why, not even were you to give me your horse—"

"Which, decidedly, I shall not."

Omar the Black paid no attention to his brother's unfeeling comment.

"No," he repeated, "not even were you to give me your horse."

For, he went on to say, Gothia was a slave in the harem of Yengi Mehmet, the Khan of Gulistan. The latter, according to Timur Bek, was as

"Thanks. Only—I have not enough money. But you, with a tenth of these jewels, can pay off the old debts. . . . Listen!" He spoke with deep, driving seriousness. "Far have I wandered,

another man's wife. So—what say you—we go home, you and I, and live there—I with Ayesha and you with Gothia—"

"I—with Gothia? But—"

"Did I not tell you I would help you?"

"How can you?"

"I shall buy her for you."

"What with—since you have no money?"

"But you have the jewels. And did not Timur Bek offer to arrange the matter with the Khan?"

"Yes."

"There you are. Timur Bek will be your intermediary with the Khan—"

Timur Bek was ready to open negotiations for the girls' purchase.

eager for money as a young flea is for blood. Therefore, before Omar the Black had a chance to leave his mark upon High Tartary and return to Gulabad, a hero, a conqueror, somebody else might covet the girl, might offer a great price for her—and Yengi Mehmet would sell her. . . .

He drew a hand across his eyes.

"Allah, Allah!" he cried. "What am I to do? Ah, if you could see this girl! As a garment, she is silver and gold! As a season, the spring!"

"So," was the other's impatient interruption, "you told me before—and bored me profoundly. The question is—you desire this girl?"

"As Shaitan, the Stoned Devil, the Accursed, desires salvation."

"Very well. You shall have her."

"But—how?"

"I shall help you"—Omar the Red paused. "For a consideration."

"There would be,"—bitterly,— "a consideration, you being you."

"There is, I being I—or for that matter, anybody being anybody. Therefore, if I help you to get your heart's desire, will you—"

"Yes, yes! Anything! Put a name to it!"

"A dear name! A grand and glorious name! The old palace back home where you and I were born, which I lost to you—"

"In a fair fight."

"Fair enough. I want it back."

"Is that all? Help yourself."

astride a horse and on stout shoes, and too, at times, on the naked soles of my feet, fighting my own fights—and other men's fights—for the sport of it and a bit of loot. But over yonder"—he pointed north—"is the only place I have ever seen worth hacking sound steel for in earnest. And over yonder the one girl, Ayesha, worth loving. Ah—somebody once told me there is no happiness in another man's shoes, nor in another man's castle, nor with

and I shall be your intermediary with Timur Bek. Hand over the jewels. I shall hurry to Gulabad, sell the jewels, talk to Timur Bek, have him buy the girl, then return here with her and—"

"No!" came Omar the Black's loud bellow.

"No?"

"No, indeed!"

"Why not?"

The other smiled thinly.



*Omar the Black cursed violently while
scissors and razor did their work.*



"Would you leave meat on trust
with a jackal."

"In other words, you do not trust
me?"

"Neither with the jewels, nor with
the girl."

"And perhaps," was the shameless
admission, "you are wise. But—well,
there is another way."

"Yes?"

"We shall both go to Gulabad."

"I—with a price on my head?"

"On your black-bearded head, don't
forget. But who, tell me, will recog-

nize this same head—without the
beard?"

"Oh"—in a towering rage—"dare you
suggest that I should—"

"Shave off your beard? Right."

"Impossible! Why, by the Prophet
the Adored, this beard,"—he ran a
caressing hand through it—"has been
my constant and loyal companion in
joy and in sorrow. It is the pride and
beauty of my manhood."

"The pride and beauty will grow
again."

For quite a while they argued, until
finally Omar the Black gave in.

But he cursed violently while scis-
sors and razor did their fell work. He
cursed yet more violently when, hav-
ing announced that the stallion was
strong enough to carry the two of
them, he was informed by his twin
brother that such a thing was out of
the question.

For, opined Omar the Red, here
was he himself most splendidly clad
as became a gentleman of High Tar-
tary. And here was the other, in
stained and odoriferous rags—a very
scarecrow of a man. It would seem
strange to people, whom they might
meet, to see them in such an intimacy,
astride the same horse.

Better far, he said, for the other to run sturdily in back of the stallion, with outstretched hand, like some importunate beggar crying for *zekat! zekat! zekat!*—alms for the sake of Allah.

He clapped his brother heartily on the back.

"It will be safest for you," he added. "Besides, you will see more of this fine broad world, walking on your two feet, than cocked high and stiff upon a saddle."

Omar the Red laughed.

SO, on an evening almost a week later, did Timur Bek laugh, back in Gulabad, when—for at first he had not recognized him, with his beard shorn off—he learned that this smooth-cheeked man was Omar the Black.

"Here you are," exclaimed Timur Bek, "with your face as soft as a girl's bosom!"

He laughed more loudly.

"Oh," he cried, "if Gothia could see you!"

Omar the Black swallowed his anger.

"She is still here?" he demanded.

"And pining for you, I have no doubt."

"And—your promise?"

"I have not forgotten it."

Timur Bek went on to say that he was ready to open negotiations about the girl's purchase with Yengi Mehmet. He would do it tactfully and drive as good a bargain as he could.

"I know, of course," he added, "that you have the jewels." He smiled. "The Jew, Baruch ben Isaac ben Ezechiel, made a great ado about it. Swore that nineteen tough Tartars, armed to the teeth, broke into his shop and assaulted him!"

"Nor," commented Omar the Black, "did he lie—exactly. For am I not the equal of the nineteen toughest Tartars in the World? Very well. My brother and I shall sell the jewels. Do you know a place—oh—a discreet place where we—"

"Can sell the jewels? Not necessary."

"But—"

"The Khan likes precious gems as much as minted gold."

"Still, he may suspect—"

"He will not listen to the evil voice of suspicion—if the jewels be rich enough. If they be rich enough, his left eye will look west, and his right east. Let's have a look at the loot."

The other reached into his breeches. He poured the gems in a shimmering stream on a low divan; and Timur Bek licked his lips. He said:

"It may take a good many of these trinkets to—"

"Nothing too much to buy me my heart's desire. Here—take half the stones!"

Timur Bek coughed.

"There is also," he said, "the matter of the money which I borrowed from the Khan, giving the little slave-girl, whom I love, as security. You were going to help me pay back the loan—remember?"

"I do. And I shall keep my word."

"The sooner, the better—for you."

Omar the Black frowned. "Eh?"

"This girl, you see, has the Khan's ear. I need her assistance. Loving me as I love her, she is anxious to return to me. And so, unless I buy her back, I am afraid she—"

"Yes, yes, yes!" Omar the Black interrupted impatiently. "Here—take another fourth of the stones. Surely it will be enough."

"Not quite."

"But—"

"Thirty thousand tomans I borrowed. It will take the rest of the stones to—"

"All right!" with a sigh. "Take them all!"

Timur Bek's hands were about to scoop up the jewels, when Omar the Red cried:

"Wait!"

He touched his brother's knee.

"You are forgetting our agreement," he told him. "You were going to use some of the treasure to pay off your old debts, so that we can return home and—"

"I have not forgotten."

"Why—"

"Listen!" Omar the Black winked slowly at his twin brother. "That time I broke into the Jew's shop, I was in a hurry. I took only half the jewels. The other half is waiting for you and me."

He turned to Timur Bek:

"When will you speak to the Khan?"

"Tonight. At once."

Timur Bek left his house. He went round the corner to the garden gate of Yengi Mehmet's palace.

There, while night was falling thicker and thicker, wrapping the streets in a cloak of trailing purple shadows, he whistled: two high, shrill notes, followed by a throaty, fluting tremolo, like a crane calling to its mate.

There was silence.

He waited; listened tensely, then repeated the call—and the gate opened softly; and a small white-robed figure slipped out and rushed into his arms with a little cry of joy.

"O my beloved!"

"O soul of my soul!"

"O king!"

"O sweetmeat!"

They spoke in a whisper, at length. They laughed. They kissed. And presently Timur Bek returned to the roof-top of his house, where Omar the Black was pacing up and down impatiently, while Omar the Red was applying himself to a bottle of Persian wine.

"Well—?" demanded the former.

"I talked to my girl."

"Not to the Khan?"

"She, as I told you, has the Khan's ear. And it seems that he is willing to sell Gothia. But—"

"Is there a but?"

"Isn't there always?" Timur Bek paused. "He is fond of her."

"What's that?"—excitedly.

"In a fatherly manner. Yes—as if she were his daughter. Therefore he insists that whoever buys the girl must marry her."

"I—marry?"

"Yes. It is part of the bargain. You must marry her at once. Tomorrow evening, at the Mosque of Hassan. A simple ceremony, with no witnesses. The girl, being shy, insists on it."

Omar the Black did not reply immediately.

Marriage, he reflected—as more than once, on his lawless path, his brother had reflected—meant bonds of steel. It meant the orderly homespun ways of life; meant—oh, all sorts of disagreeable things. . . . An end to freedom!

And it was on his tongue to exclaim:

"No! Let Yengi Mehmet keep the girl!"

But he reconsidered as he thought of her—with her full red lips, and her brown hair as smooth as oil, and her gray eyes that seemed to hold all the secret wisdom, all the secret sweet mockery of womanhood.

Lovely! So very lovely!

He loved her. . . . Besides, coming to think of it, marriage was not necessarily the end. Bonds of steel, too, could be broken—by a strong and ruthless man.

"Very well," he announced. "Marriage it will be." And, severely, to his brother: "Let this be a lesson to you—to follow in my virtuous footsteps!"

"As virtuous," remarked Timur Bek, "as mine own. For I too shall take a wife unto myself—the little slave-girl whom I love."

"You repaid your loan to the Khan?"

"Thanks to you, Great-Heart. Tomorrow morning my love and I are going away. Therefore if, for the time being, you and your bride and your brother would care to live in my house, you are welcome. There is food in the larder and wine in the cellar. And after all, with your jewels gone—"

"I shall be poor, I know."

"Only," chimed in Omar the Red, "until Baruch, the rich Jew, contributes another handful of gems."

LATE on the following evening Omar the Black, arrayed in some of his brother's handsome clothes, went to the Mosque—an ancient and beautiful building raised on a flight of broad marble steps, its great horseshoe gateway covered with delicate mosaic arabesques in mauve and silver and heliotrope and elfin-green.

There the bride, wrapped from head to foot in three heavy white wedding veils, awaited him.

She saw his smooth cheeks. But she gave no more than a little start. For she had been warned of what had happened to his beard; and with or without his beard, she loved him—loved him dearly.

Slowly he walked up to her. He bowed—and so did she.

HAND in hand they stepped before the green-turbaned priest, who united them in holy wedlock, according to the rites of Islam:

"Will you, O son of Adam, take this woman to wife—before God the One, and the Prophet the Adored, and the multitude of the Blessed Angels?"

"I will!"

"Will you, O daughter of Eve, take this man to husband—before God the One, and the Prophet the Adored, and the multitude of the Blessed Angels?"

"I will!"

Silence. . . . Omar the Black stared at his wife.

"Soon to be mine!" he whispered. "Soon—soon!"

Then there was the priest chanting a *surah* from the Koran in nasal, sacerdotal tones:

For the Merciful hath taught the Koran,

He created the male and the female,

He taught them clear speech,

He taught them desire and fulfilment.

An echo of His own creation.

So which of the Lord's bounties would ye twain deny?

The sun and the moon in their courses,

And the planets do homage to Him,

And the heaven He raised it and appointed the balance,

And the earth He prepared it for living things.

Therein He created fruit, and the palm with sheaths,

And grain with its husks, and the fragrant herb,

And the male and the female of man and of beast.

So which of the Lord's bounties would ye twain deny?

"Not I," said Omar the Black to his wife, "to deny this particular bounty."

She gave a happy little laugh; the priest finished; husband and wife salaamed toward Mecca; and then Omar took her to Timur Bek's house, up to the rooftop beneath the stars.

There his brother was. He greeted the couple with loud shouts of:

"Yoo-yoo-yoo!"

But Omar the Black cut him short. "Enough yoo-yoo-yoo for the nonce," he said.

"This is the one moment—of many, many moments—when I can do without your company."

So Omar the Red left—winking, in passing, at the bride. And a few sec-

onds later, slowly and clumsily, since his hands trembled so, Omar the Black raised the three wedding veils one by one.

"Wah," he whispered throatily, "you are all my dreams come true!"

Then, swiftly, he receded a step. For, with the moon laying a mocking silver ribbon across her features, he saw that the woman whom he had married was Fathouma, the Grand Khan's sister, and not Gothia.

Omar stood there without speaking. He stared at her.

Even more faded she was than when he had seen her last; more gray the hair that curled on her temples; more sharply etched the network of wrinkles at the corners of her brown gold-flecked eyes. But still the same eyes—with the same tenderness in them, the same sweetness and simplicity, the same depth of feeling. Eyes that lit up as she said to him:

"You broke my heart, years ago, when you left me. But now, the Lord be praised, you have made it whole again."

She walked up to him. And what could he do but take her into his arms?

"Last night," she went on, "when Timur Bek sent me word through Gothia that you had come to Gulabad in search of me, that you wanted me—wanted me for wife—I almost swooned with the great joy of it. And it was so tactful of you to insist on a simple wedding, you and I!" he winced a little at her next words—"being no longer young, less people ridicule us. Already Esa is on his way to tell my brother the news; and my brother, too, will be so very happy—"

She stopped for breath. She kissed him.

"And," she went on, "I talked to my cousin, the Khan of Kulistan. He will make you a captain in the palace guard, although—" with a fleeting smile curling her lips—"he is a little angry at you."

"Why?"

"Because of Gothia."

"Oh!"

"He liked her, and," she laughed—"more than merely liked her. *Hayah*—the old cat, though blind and lame, still hankers after mice! And you, like the generous soul you are, giving all your jewels to Timur Bek, so that he could pay back to Yengi Mehmet what he owed him, and free Gothia, and marry her!"

He gave a start.

"You said—marry?"

"Did you not know? Very early this morning they were to the mosque and became man and wife. And now they are off to the steppe, the wilderness, to spend their honeymoon. For they are young. They can stand the rigor, the chill harsh winds, the open air. Well!"—and again she smiled, while

again he winced a little—"we are not young, you and I. But our love is as great as theirs—is it not, my lord?"

He did not reply immediately. He looked at her, with a long and searching look. And then—nor was it altogether because he feared her brother the Grand Khan, and knew that this time he would have no chance at all to get away, but also, and chiefly, because of a queer feeling in his soul, something akin to tender pity—he inclined his head and said:

"There was never love greater than mine, O heart of seven roses!"

He was silent; and he thought, with supreme self-satisfaction:

"When I do a thing, by Allah and by Allah, I do it in style! It is the glorious way of me."

So he bowed gallantly in the Persian manner, his hand on his breast. He was about to kneel before her, and had already bent his left leg, when suddenly he felt a stabbing pain and gave a cry.

"Why! Oh," was her anxious query, "what is the matter?"

"Nothing, nothing."

"But I heard you—"

"A little pain—in my left leg."

"A wound?"

"No. A touch of rheumatism."

She shook a finger at him.

"Your own fault!"

"Eh?"

"Yes. To be up here on the roof, late at night, in the cold, as if you were in your teens!"

"But—"

"You are old enough to have more sense! Off to bed with you—and a hot brick at your feet, and a glass of mulled wine to put you to sleep. Tomorrow we'll leave this draughty house, and stay with my cousin the Khan of Gulistan, and—"

"Look—" he interrupted indignantly.

"Be quiet! I know what is good for you."

Firmly he took him by the arm and led him down the stairs.

He did not resist. They passed Omar the Red's room. And Omar the Black bit his lips and frowned as he heard a faint, "Yoo-yoo-yoo!" heard, a moment later, something which sounded, suspiciously, like laughter.

If cannot be said that, during the days that followed, Omar the Black was exactly unhappy. In fact, though he hated to admit it, he was enjoying life.

There was his wife. Faded, sure enough, and wrinkled. Not lovely at all, not the one to quicken a man's heartbeat and set his flesh to aching. On the other hand, she was so kindly, so very, very kindly—and so strangely humble when, frequently, she said to him:

"You bring me great happiness. I love you, O best beloved!"

He would kiss her gently; lying like a gentleman, and after a while not lying at all, though he thought he did, he would reply:

"So do I love you, O delight!"

Furthermore—oh, yes, Fathouma was right—he was no longer in his teens, no longer eager to travel the hard road, with ever danger and death lurking around the corner. And it was pleasant to be once more, as formerly at the court of the Grand Khan of the Golden Steppe, a man of fashion, dressed in cloak and breeches of handsomely embroidered Bokharan satin, and hose of gossamer silk, and boots of soft red leather, and a voluminous turban that had cost fifty pieces of silver—and always a deal of money clanking in his breeches, what with his captain's pay and his wife's generosity—and the work quite suiting his fancy.

Indeed, Omar did no work to speak of. Except that, as a captain in the service of the Khan of Gulistan, he would mount guard at the palace every forenoon for a leisurely, strolling hour or two, swapping yarns and boasts and lies with the other tall captains. And in the afternoons he would whistle to his tawny Afghan hound and stalk through the streets and bazaars, buying whatever he wished, and once in a while getting into a row because of insult real or, more often, imagined.

AND in the evenings he would go on an occasional riotous drinking-bout, rolling home late and noisy—and Fathouma would be waiting for him, would cool his throbbing temples with scented water, nor give him the sharp edge of her tongue, but warn:

"You must be careful, best beloved.

A man of your years—"

He would flare up.

"What do you mean—a man of my years?" he would demand. "Why, my heart is the same as ever it was, keen and lightsome! And my soul has the same golden fire, and my joints are still greased with the rich grease of youth, and—"

"Of course," she would agree soothingly. "And yet you look a little tired, and so you had better have your breakfast in bed tomorrow. And here"—stirring a cup that held a steaming, dark, strong-smelling broth—"some tea of bitter herbs for your stomach."

"No, no!"

"Yes, yes! Drink it at one swallow, hero, and it will not taste so bad."

He would sigh—and obey.

He would, to tell the truth, feel better for it the next day, and get up later and later as morning succeeded morning.

As time progressed, moreover, Omar went on fewer drinking-bouts; and gradually he became less eager at

smelling out insults and picking quarrels with all and sundry. In fact, the only quarrel which he had—and carefully nursed—was with his brother.

It was the latter, he would reflect, who by persuading him to return to Gulabad, had been responsible for everything: his marriage as well as the loss of his fine black beard. And



Gothia, beautiful as a season in Spring.

"You are rich."

"I am not."

"But—"

"My captain's pay is a mere pittance."

"Your wife—"

"Has plenty. Yes. And,"—self-righteously,—"it would never do for a gentleman to accept money from a woman. Surely even *you* know that."

Then, when the other grew angry and abusive, Omar the Black pointed to the door:

"Begone, O creature!" he shouted.

He instructed the palace servants that hereafter his twin brother was no

longer to be admitted; and when Fathouma, who had heard him give the order, argued with him, he told her:

"You do not know my brother. Al-

ways, since his early childhood days, he has been a most lawless and sinful person, has always tried to lead me down the crooked road of temptation. He, I assure you, is not the proper companion for the like of me. And his way with the women—to kiss and ride away—shocking, shocking!"

Hypocritical? Not really. Or if he was, he did not know it.

Indeed, somehow, he meant what he said; began to fancy himself as a most sober and respectable citizen.

Therefore when Omar the Red called at the palace, asking his twin brother to fulfil his side of the agreement—to supply the cash for settling the old debts and help him get back to the castle and to Ayesha—Omar the Black raised an eyebrow.

"Do you expect me, an honorable Tartar gentleman," he demanded, "a captain in the Khan's service, to take part in such a wicked enterprise as robbing a shop? Ah—shame on you!"

"We don't have to rob the shop."

"Then how—"

NO longer his heart leaped and skipped like a gay little rabbit across the lead whenever he beheld a new face, a young face, a pretty face. And one day when Fathouma mentioned that Timur Bek and his bride were expected home from their honeymoon—and what about enteraining them at dinner?—he shook his head.

"No," he said.

"But— isn't Timur your friend?"

"He is. But Gothia—"

"Yes?"



"A toothsome morsel, I grant you. Only—inclined to be flighty."

"I don't think so."

"I know. Why, the very first time I saw her, she gave me the quirk of the eye. She asked me, if you want blunt speech—"

"Please! Not too blunt!"

"You are quite right. It would not be fit for your ears. Anyway, I would have none of her. For by the Prophet, I have always followed the white road of honor—naturally, being what I am. Besides, was not my friend Timur Bek in love with the young person? So, as you know, I let him have my jewels, so that he might buy himself his heart's desire."

He smiled benignly; went on in resonant and rather unctuous accents: "The Lord's blessings on them both!"

Maybe Omar the Black believed that he spoke the truth. Maybe Fathouma did likewise; and maybe, being as clever in one way as she was simple in another, she did not—though without letting on.

For she loved her husband. She loved his very failings, and defended them, even to herself. She was happy—and happiest when, more and more frequently, he would spend the night at home and they would be alone; when he would sit by her side, pleasant and jovial and companionable, and tell her tales of his past life, his past prowess and bravery, his past motley adventures, east, north, south, west.

The love in her brown gold-flecked eyes would enkindle his imagination. And—oh, the clanking, stirring tales he would tell then:

"The pick of the lads of the far wide roads I was, with ever my sword eager for a bit of strife, ever a fine thirst tickling my gullet, ever the bold, bold eyes of me giving the wink and smile at the passing girls, and they—the dears, the darlings!—giving the same wink and smile straight back at me—"

He would interrupt himself.

"That was," he would add, "before I met you."

"Of course."

She would laugh. She was not jealous of the past, being wiser than most women. Also—oh, yes, she *was* clever—the very fact that his mind was dwelling more and more on former days and former deeds, proved to her that he was getting old and ready to settle down—which was as she wished.



And so late one afternoon when—it happened rarely nowadays—Omar the Black had gone to split a bottle or two with a boon companion, Fathouma decided that she would surprise him, would buy him a present: the handsomest carved emerald to be had in Gulabad.

She put on her swathing street veils and called to one of the lackeys, a Persian, who had recently been hired and who was a most conscientious servant—always present when he was needed and ready to do her bidding:

"Hossayn!"

He salaamed. "Heaven-born?"

"I am going to the bazaar to do some shopping. Come with me."

"Listen is obey!"

Again he salaamed. He led the way out of the palace, crying loudly:

"Give way, Moslems! Give way for the Heaven-born, the Princess of High Tartary!"

He stalked ahead, clearing a path with the help of a long brass-tipped stave.

Fathouma followed. She was excited, elated. Ah, what an emerald she would buy her lord!

She tripped along. And she did not know that, as they passed a dark postern, Hassayn exchanged a cough and a fleeting glance with a stranger who stood there hidden in the coiling, trooping shadows. Nor could she

know that several days earlier Hassayn had been buttonholed on the street by this same stranger, who had spoken to him at whispered length and taken him to a tavern.

There, over glasses of potent milk-white *raki*, they had continued their conversation. There had been spirited haggling and bargaining. Finally, with a sigh, the other had well greased the Persian's greedy palm, giving him whatever gold and silver coins remained in his waist-shawl. He had added, for good measure, a couple of rings and a dagger.

He had leaned across the table, had asked:

"Do you know what I am thinking?"

"Well?"

"I am thinking,"—in a purring voice,—"that I have three more daggers, not as handsome as this but quite as sharp—and thinking, also, that, should you deceive me, yours might be a fine throat for slitting."

The Persian had turned pale.

"Do not bristle at me, tall warrior!" he had begged. "*I—deceive you?* Never!"

"Of course not."

"Only—"

"Only?" threateningly.

"I am not the only servant. Nor can I tell when the Heaven-born will—"

"I know. And I do not demand the impossible. All I expect you to do is to be attentive to her, to make a point of hovering near, being watchful."

He muttered instructions; and the Persian inclined his head.

"I understand."

So there was now, in passing, the glance, the cough—and once more:

"Give way, Moslems! Give way for the Heaven-born, the Princess of High Tartary!"

The people gave way as well as they could. But as Fathouma and the lackey approached the Street of the Western Traders, where the jewelers displayed their precious wares, the alleys and squares and marketplaces became ever more packed with milling, moiling, perspiring humanity, not to mention humanity's wives and children and mothers-in-law and visiting country cousins.

For today—and as it turned out, it was a lucky stroke of fortune for the stranger who had left the postern and was following the two as closely as he could—was a great Islamic festival: the day preceding the *Lelet el-Kadr*, the Night of Honor, the anniversary of the blessed occasion when Allah, in His mercy, revealed the Book of the Koran to His messenger Mohammed.

A most solemn occasion, the *Lelet el-Kadr*—it being the night when the Sidr, which is the lotus tree and which bears as many leaves as there are human beings, is shaken in Paradise by the Archangel Israfil, and on each leaf is inscribed the name of a person who will die during the coming year, should it drop.

SMALL wonder that strong, personal interest is behind the prayers after sunset. Small wonder, furthermore, that all lights are extinguished—lest dark and evil djinn find their way up to Paradise and nudge the Archangel, startling him and causing him to shake down the wrong leaf.

Small wonder, finally, that on the preceding day there should be merry-making—a fit prelude to the Night of Honor, the Night of Fear, the Night of Repentance.

So here in Gulabad as in the rest of the Islamic world, gay throngs were everywhere, people of all High Tartary, with here and there men from the farther east and south and north and west—Persians, Afghans, Chinese, Siberians, Tibetans, even men from distant Hindustan and Burma, come across mountains and plains to fatten their purses on the holiday trade.

Doing well, making handsome profits.

For all were ready to spend what they could—and could not—afford. All were enjoying themselves after the Orient's immemorial fashion, resplendently and extravagantly and blaringly.

The men swaggered and strutted, fingering daggers, cocking immense turbans or shaggy sheepskin bonnets at rakish devil-may-care angles. The women minced along, rolling their hips and, above their thin, coquettish face-veils, their eyes. The little boys tried to emulate their fathers in swaggering and strutting; to emulate each other in the shouting of loud, salty abuse. The little girls rivalled the other little girls in the gay, pansy shades of their loose trousers and the consumption of greasy, poisonously pink-and-green sweetmeats.

There were jugglers and knife-tossers, sword-swallowers and fire-eaters and painted dancing-girls. There were cook-shops and toy-booths and merry-go-rounds. There were itinerant dervish preachers chanting the glories of Allah the One, the Prophet Mohammed and the Forty-Seven True Saints.

There were bear-leaders, ape-leaders, fortune-tellers, bards, buffoons and Punch-and-Judy shows. There were large, bell-shaped tents where golden-skinned gypsy girls trilled and quavered melancholy songs to the accompaniment of guitars and tambourines. There was, of course, a great deal of love-making—the love-making of Asia, which is frank and a trifle indelicate.

There were the many street-cries.

"Sugared water! Sugared water here—and sweeten your breath!" would come the call of the lemonade-seller as he clanked his metal cups, while the vendor of parched grain, rattling the wares in his basket, would chime in with: "Pips! O pips! Roasted and ripe and rare! To sharpen your teeth—your stomach—your mind!"

"Trade with me, O Moslems! I am the father and mother of all cut-rates!"

"Look! Look! A handsome fowl from the Khan's chicken coop!"

"And stolen—most likely!"

Laughter then—swallowed, a moment later, by more and louder cries.

"Out of the way—and say, 'There is but One God!'"—the long, quivering yell of the water-carrier, lugging the lukewarm fluid in a goat's-skin bag, immensely heavy, fit burden for a buffalo.

"My supper is in Allah's hands, O True Believers! My supper is in Allah's hands! Whatever you give, that will return to you through Allah!"—the whine of a ragged old vagrant whose wallet perhaps contained more provision than the larder of many a respectable housewife.

"The grave is darkness—and good deeds are its lamps!"—the shriek of a blind beggarwoman, rapping two dry sticks together.

"In your protection, O honorable gentleman!"—the hiccoughy moan of a peasant, drunk with hashheesh, whom a constable was dragging by the ear in the direction of the jail, the peasant's wife trailing on behind with throaty plaints of: "O calamity! O great and stinking shame! O most decidedly not father to our sons!"—her balled fists meanwhile ably assisting the policeman.

There was more laughter; and Fathouma, too, laughed as she followed Hossayn.

Only rarely she left the palace; and everything amused her. She decided she would tell Omar the Black all about it tonight when she saw him—and she progressed slowly through the throng, with the stranger still in back; then she stopped, a little nervous, as there was a brawl between a Persian merchant and a Turkoman nomad who disputed the right of way.

NEITHER would budge. They glared at one another. Presently they became angry, and anger gave way to rage—and then a stream of abuse, of that vitriolic and picturesque vituperation in which Central Asia excels.

"Owl Donkey! Jew! Christian! Leper! Seller of pigs' tripe!" This from the lips of the elderly Persian whose carefully trimmed, snow-white whiskers gave him an aspect of patriarchal Old Testament dignity in ludicrous contrast with the foul invective which he was using. "Uncouth and swinish creature! Eater of filth! Wearer of a verminous turban!"

The reply was prompt:

"Basest of hyenas! Goat of a small most goatish! Now, by my honor, you shall eat stick!"

The stick, swinging by a leather thong from the Turkoman's wrist, was two pounds of tough blackthorn. It was raised and brought down with full force—the Persian moving away just in time and drawing a curved dagger.

People rushed up, closed in, took sides.

It was the beginning of a full-fledged battle royal—and Fathouma cried:

"Hossayn! Hossayn! Get me out of here!"

But Hossayn was not near her. All she saw of him, some yards away, was his red fez bobbing up and down in the mob, as if he were drowning.

"Hossayn! Oh, Hossayn!"

Farther and farther floated the fez; the mob seemed to be carrying the man away; and Fathouma became terribly frightened—jostled and pushed about—and everywhere the striking fists, the glistening weapons—everywhere the shrieks of rage and pain.

She wept helplessly, hopelessly. Almost she fainted.

Then she felt a firm grip on her elbow; heard a reassuring voice in her ear:

"This way, Heaven-born!"

A MOMENT later, a man, tall and broad-shouldered, tucked her under one arm as if she were a child, while with the other, wielding a sword, he carved a path through the crowd. They turned a corner; reached a back alley; his knee pushed open a door; and she found herself in the shed of a provision merchant's shop.

There, in the dim light that drifted through a window high on the wall, she saw her rescuer: a man with an eagle's beak of a nose, thin lips, small, greenish eyes. A man—she thought with a start—as like to her husband as peas in a pod, except that his beard was red and not black. . . .

She knew at once who he was:

"You—you are Omar the Red! Ah, the lucky, lucky day for me!"

"Luckier for myself!"

"My husband will be so grateful."

"Doubtless. But this time, knowing my brother, I shall make sure, quite sure, of his gratitude." A smile like milk curdling flitted across his face. "Tell me," he asked, "how good are you at the riding?"

"The—riding?"

"Yes. On a horse. A horse, swift and powerful, to carry the two of us, and you on the saddle in front of me, and with one of my arms—*woah!* there have been plenty women in the past who liked the strength of it—around your waist to hold you steady."

She looked at him.

"Oh," she faltered, "but—"

"Listen!"

He spoke at length. And, he wondered, was that a laugh trembling on her lips? No, no! it must be the beginning of a cry of fear; and, at once, there was his sword to the fore.

"Be quiet!" he warned her. "Or else—and you the woman and I the tough ruffian—here is the point of my blade for the whitest breast!"

So she was quiet; and he went on:

"Come! My horse is waiting for us—and so are the steppes of High Tartary."

He led her out of the shed, walking close to her. A loving couple, people would have thought; and none to know that, hidden by the folds of the man's cloak, a dagger was pressed against the small of the woman's back.

By this time, the merry-making had ceased. There came the booming of



"Do not worry about credit, Lord. Take whatever you wish," said Baruch.

the sunset gun from the great Mosque where, in the west, it raised its minaret of rosy marble. There came, immediately afterwards, the muezzin's throaty chant that the Night of Honor, the Night of Fear and Repentance, was near; and then lights were extinguished everywhere against the malign flitting of the dark and evil djinns, and the places of worship were filled with the Faithful, the streets and alleys became deserted.

Not a wayfarer anywhere. Hardly a sound.

Only, as a sturdy stallion with two in the saddle rode through the northern gate, a sleepy sentinel's challenge:

"Who goes there?"

"A merchant and his wife."

"Travel in peace, O Moslems!"

So Fathouma and Omar the Red were off at a gallop; while at just about the same time, when Omar the Black returned to the palace, there was a Persian lackey telling him a terrible tale—a tale of heroism, showing, in

proof, various bruises and even a bandaged shoulder and explaining how he had been attacked by a *shoda*, a rough customer, had been kicked, cuffed, knocked down, sliced and stabbed with a number of sharp weapons.

With a great throng of men, each intent on his own brawl, all about him, he had been helpless; and—Al-lah!—the cruel, brutal strength of this red-bearded scoundrel. . . .

"Eh?" interrupted Omar the Black. "You—you said red-bearded?"

"Superbly, silkily red-bearded. And hook-nosed. And armed to the teeth. . . ."

"And with an evil glint in his eyes?"

"Most evil!"

THE Persian went on to relate that here he was, prone on the ground, grievously wounded. And there was the other, with the Heaven-born in a faint and slung across his shoulders as if she were a bag of turnips; and the man's parting words had been:

"Take a message to Omar the Black. Tell him to come quickly, and alone, and with a queen's ransom in his

breeches. Let him take the *Darb-i-Sultani*, the King's Highway, straight north into High Tartary. And, presently, at a place of my own choosing, I shall have word with him."

Such was the lackey's story; and Omar the Black did not doubt it, since he knew his brother.

What puzzled him later on—and what, indeed, he cannot understand to this day, though frequently he has asked his wife about it—was what she did or, rather, what she did not do. Why—he wondered—did she not resist? Why did she neither struggle nor cry out?

"How could I?" she would explain. "At first I thought he had come to rescue me. I was grateful."

"Still—after you discovered that he . . ."

"I was helpless. I am a weak woman—and there was the point of his dagger pressed against my spine."

"Even so—when you passed, on the saddle in front of him, through the gate—a word to the sentinel. . . ."

"It would have been my last. The dagger. . . ."

"Omar the Red would not have carried out his threat."

"How was I to know? Such a scoundrel, this brother of yours—you yourself used to tell me—and not at all to be trusted."

SO, afterwards, was Fathouma's explanation; and we repeat that Omar the Black—and small blame to him—was puzzled.

But, at the time of the kidnaping, the only emotion he felt was worry. Dreadful worry. Why, he loved his wife—and ho, life without her, like a house without a light, a tree without a leaf. . . .

As soon as Hossayn told him the news, he took all his money, all his jewels and whatever of Fathouma's he could find. As an afterthought, he went to the shop of Baruch ben Isaac ben Ezechiel, the rich Jew.

Better too much treasure—he reflected—than too little. He told himself—since, after all, in spite of his worry, he was still the same Omar the Black—that loot was loot and would always come in handy. Therefore, courteously, he asked for credit; was courteously granted it—for was he not the husband of a Tartar Princess and a captain in the Khan's palace guard? The merchant salaamed.

"Do not worry about credit, lord. Take whatever you wish."

Omar wished a lot, took a lot; and, within the hour, followed his wife and his twin brother up the *Darb-i-Sultani*, into the north.

All night he rode and all the following morning.

At first, near Gulabad, the land was fertile, with tight little villages and checkerboard fields folded compactly

into valleys where small rivers ran. But, toward noon, the steppe came to him.

The heart of the steppe.

The heart of High Tartary.

IT came with orange and purple and heliotrope; with the sands spawning their monotonous, brittle eternities toward a vague horizon. It came with an insolent, lifeless nakedness; and when, occasionally, there was a sign of life—a vulture poised high on stiff, quivering wings, a jackal loping along like an obscene, gray thought, or a nomad astride his dromedary, his jaws and brows bound up mummy-fashion against the whirling sand grains, passing with never a word of cheerful greeting—it seemed a rank intrusion, a weak and puerile challenge to the infinite wilderness.

A lonely land. A harsh and arid land. No silken luxury here. No ease and comfort.

The heat was brutish, brassy. His rheumatic leg ached.

Yet, gradually, he became conscious of a queer elation.

It had been long years—he told himself—since he had left High Tartary. Nor had he ever wished to return. Still—why—it was his own land, his dear land. . . .

"Yes, yes!" he cried; and, almost, he forgot what had taken him here, almost forgot Fathouma. "Here—rain or shine, cloudy sky or brazen sun—is my own land, my dear land! Here is freedom! And here, ever, the stout, happy heart!"

He put spurs to his horse and galloped on, grudging each hour of rest. And afternoon died; and evening brought a gloomy iridescence, a twilight of pastel shades, a distant mountain chain with blues and ochres of every hue gleaming on the slopes; and a few days' ride beyond the range—he knew—was Nadirabad nestling in the shadows of the old, ancestral castle; and he dismounted and made a small campfire; and night dropped, suddenly, like a shutter, the way it does on the steppe; and out of the night came a mocking call:

"Welcome, brother!"

Omar the Red stepped from behind a rock; and Omar the Black jumped up, sword in hand.

"Dog with a dog's heart!" he yelled. "I shall fight you for Fathouma!"

"Fight? No, no! You shall pay me for her—and, by the same token, live up to our agreement."

So, since curses and threats did not help matters, there was, presently, a deal of money thrown on the ground and a wealth of glittering jewels—some come by honestly, and some less so.

"Enough," remarked Omar the Red, "to pay back the debts to the Nadirabad merchants—and to lift the mortgage on the castle—and for Ayesha and me to live on comfortably for a number of years."

"For more than a number of years," announced Fathouma, stepping into the flickering light of the campfire. "Indeed until the end of your days—if you are ready to do your share of proper toil."

She turned to her husband.

"The soil up yonder, your brother tells me, is fat," she continued, "and the grass is green and sappy and the water pure. A fine chance, in your own country, for a man's hard, decent work—even a man of your years—and there we shall live, the four of us, and thrive—God willing!"

"You," stammered Omar the Black, "you said—the four of us?"

"Ayesha and your brother—and you and I. Can you not add two and two?"

Now this—to live home once more at home—had been the very thing which, deep in his soul, he had dreamed of and longed for, ever since he had come to the steppe. But it would not do for a man to give in too quickly to his wife.

"Nothing of the sort!" he replied. "We shall ride back to Gulabad and—"

"Listen!" she interrupted.

"Yes?"

She stepped up close to him.

"Would you want," she demanded, lowering her voice, "your child to be born in an alien land?"

He gave a start.

"My—my child?"

"Mine too." She smiled. "Our child, before the end of many months. Oh yes—my hair is gray. But,—blushing a little—"I am not as old as all that."

Then he took her tenderly into his arms.

"By the Prophet the Adored!" he cried triumphantly. "Let it be a man-child, a little son, to you and me! A strong little son! The strongest in all High Tartary—"

"Except," cut in Omar the Red, "for the son whom Ayesha shall bear to me."

"Liar!"

"Liar yourself!"

"Drunkard!"

"Unclean pimple!"

Almost, they came to blows.

AND the end of the tale?

The end of the tale is not yet.

But, up there in the ancient castle in High Tartary, live two white-haired men. White-haired, too, their wives. And the latter exchanging winks when, occasionally, their husbands comment naggingly, querulously, about the morals of Islam's younger generation, including their grandsons. . . .

Another colorful story by Achmed Abdullah will appear in an early issue.

He lost his first big fight in the prize-ring, but goes on to a still greater one.

by **JOEL REEVE**

Gunners Live Tough

SAMMY PROTO looked as though he had come a long way from Passaic High and amateur bootleg bouts, and cheap dance-halls where Mag Kusciko and he won prizes for their waltzing. He wore his blond hair long and sleeked back; his English drape suit fit him like a moderate dream; his cravat was a masterpiece of quiet foulard. He sat in the 40 Club and was outwardly at ease, listening to Mag and Boodlee.

Boodlee Walsh had come along with them, rounding off the corners and smoothing the way for them all. Boodlee was lean and elegant and brash, even if he had only spent one semester in the high-school before turning to the management of prize-fighters, chorines and Walkathons.

"I brought you along right, didn't I, Sammy? You never lost a fight yet, did you? That is the way I operate, Sammy—for your own good. You will fight Joe Turkin, and you will be the champion," he said.

Sammy's mild blue eyes were sharp as tacks, but his mouth was doubtful, the full lips parted as though to speak words which would not quite come. He looked at Mag—Marline Lovelace, now—and knew that it was all wrong, that he was unable to beat one side of Joe Turkin, that tough and gallant leather champ.

Marline was tall—almost a half-inch taller than Sammy's five six. She had a deep throaty voice and long shapely legs, currently on display in the 40 Club show. Marline had made her mark, and her clever dark head never stopped scheming to bring them all to the top of the heap. She said:

"Sometimes I get impatient with you, Sammy darling. Sometimes I think you are not grateful for what I and Boodlee have done for you."

Boodlee's voice was a hammer: "You got to do it, Sammy. I told 'em you'd sign tonight. Joe Turkin agreed to box you. You got to, Sammy!"

Sammy could think straight, but he never had the facility for words of his two youthful and sharp companions. He said: "I have no confidence in this match. I have seen Joe Turkin. He is a great fighter. Me—I am only a couple years out of the amateurs." His voice trailed off. It sounded as if he were scared. Mag—Marline—was looking queerly at him. Boodlee just kept yammering, "You got to do it."

If there was fear, that was the cause of it. Marline and Boodlee had gone confidently along, braving ridicule, bad breaks, hard knocks, always getting ahead. Sammy had tagged along with his mediocre boxing skill, his hard but not deadly right-hand punch behind a long, defensive left poke. He had been with them, but not quite up to them.

He had stuck because of Mag—Marline—of course. And maybe because of Boodlee too, earnest, hard-headed Boodlee, who labored night and day that the trio should advance. There was something deep within him that responded to this old tie, that gave him the will to go along, fighting the world.

But Joe Turkin—that battered, tough, clever little man, was a great

fighter, and Sammy was his dish. Sammy said:

"You got me wrong. I'm not scared—"

Marline cut in, her dark eyes heavy upon him. "I have always had confidence in you, Sammy. You are either a champ, Sammy, or you are a bum. Personally, I hope you are a champ; you know that, Sammy."

She did not smile at him. She rose and walked away to dress for the show, her hips swaying. Boodlee watched her. Sammy watched her. Boodlee let his eyes slide to the naked adoration with which Sammy always looked at Marline. Boodlee said: "Mason's waiting for us. Joe already signed."

Sammy watched the girl all the way to the screen before the hall door which led to the dressing-rooms. He did not turn his head. "All right, Boodlee. You win."

AFTER the signing, Sammy walked. Alone, he always noticed the uniformed men. There were thousands; and pretty soon the draft board would put one on Sammy. It was a thing which would happen, and it was all right. A man would do his duty when the time came.



He posed beside his beloved B26.

Joe said: "Hey, soldier! Good luck!" Sammy said: "Atta-boy, sailor!" The referee, said sotto voce: "Remember this is a fight!"



Meantime, there was Marline; and soon there would be relentless, pugnacious Joe Turkin, who could box and hit and assimilate all Sammy could hand out, and come back for more. A better man. . . .

Was it a disgrace to be beaten by a better man? No!

Yet there was Marline and Boodle, getting ahead, their names in the columns, making good in Big Time. Sammy could not keep pace. His heart ached, knowing he could not stand the pace. He felt alone, terribly alone, and in him the self-pity which he could not quite control made a weeping noise which Sammy alone could hear.

In the ring it was like a dream, only much sharper than any dream. Boodle was confident, putting on a great show, colorful, shrewd. Marline was in the press row—Sammy could see her talking with Wes Brookley, the columnist who mixed sports and the theater and whatnot in his daily stint and was very famous. Brookley had predicted Turkin by a kayo in the fifth.

Turkin sat on his stool, chewing gum, relaxed, thick-browed, genial. Celebrities came and bowed and left, while the referee leaned on the ropes, bored and impatient.

Marline did not stop talking to Brookley—she would work a plug out of him, all right. She had that eye for business. Sammy wished Boodle wouldn't keep moving in front of him, blocking off his view of Marline.

The last ex-champion retired, the lights dimmed, the referee was chanting his ritual, "Shake hands now and come out fighting!" Turkin's eyes were bold, quizzical, amused. Sammy went back, and his hands rested on the top rope, and Marline was looking up at last, smiling with her wide, generous mouth, mitting him. Sammy nodded, still bemused, loving her, doubting himself. . . . The bell was like a cold shower of water. . . .

Boodle yelled: "Box him, pal!"

Joe Turkin had a trick of sparring for one second, then ducking his bullet head and plunging close. After the shock of his attack, he would back off and call his shots on an astonished and pained opponent. That was his style—simple but baffling in its execution, terrific in speed and power.

He came in with it, and Sammy poked him off with the long left.

Joe grinned, bounced, tried again. His shoulder dropped; he got in. Sammy's middle began to cave under thuds which were like mule-kicks.

Then Joe was away, working his hook. Sammy stood and boxed. Joe came in and threw a hard right.

There was an opening. It was tiny, but it was a flaw. Sammy evaded the right and came back. Joe threw it again, and this time Sammy acted. He hit into the spot with all he had.

He got it home. He felt Joe's jaw give under that straight, booming, Sunday wallop. Turkin, stopped dead, did a nip-up, sprawling in the air, landing on his back, flattened out.

Sammy was in a neutral corner, breathless, unbelieving. He stared down where Marline screamed with joy, where Brookley's amazement was plain, then over at Boodle's red and joyous face. It had been dead center. Nobody, not even Turkin, could get over a punch like that. Joy welled where despair had nestled inside Sammy Proto. He turned to look at poor Turkin.

Poor Turkin was on his feet at "five," his squinting eyes shallow, but intent. Sammy danced out, careful, determined not to let Turkin hold him. He fiddled, jabbing, winding up his right for one more blow.

Before his eyes, Joe Turkin exploded into action. It was like suddenly engaging in combat with a supposed corpse. Fists clubbed at Sammy, hammered him back, making him cover, pushing him to the ropes.

He was off-balance; he could not fight back. The stone sunk in him; his hands fumbled for a grip on this devastating little bundle of dynamite which slugged him. A gun seemed to go off, very loudly. . . .

It was a good shot, Sammy thought dully. Hit him right on the head. He tried to stay erect, wondering who would shoot a gun in the Arena during a fight. . . .

The second barrel struck him, right on the jaw. The marksman was terrific, Sammy decided. Better to lie down—make a smaller target. He stayed there, his eyes open, convinced that he was as good as dead. No man could absorb two bullets in the head and survive, he thought.

THEN, away off, a voice was complaining: "Sammy's a boxer, not a fighter. . . . He never got started. . . ."

Wes Brookley's drawl said: "Your Sammy is synthetic. He's no fighter. Too much imagination. He jitters."

It was the dressing-room, and the acrid odor of smelling-salts seared his nostrils. Sammy's jaw would not function. He tried to speak, but only croaked with pain. Those shots had been blows by Turkin's gloves—and Sammy knew his jaw was broken.

Boodle was saying: "Sammy had him on the canvas, then couldn't keep him there. That's no disgrace."

"But when Turkin got up, Sammy showed geezer," said Brookley cynically. "He can dish it out, but he can't take it. Sorry, Boodle, that's my story."

Sammy gave over trying to speak. They took him to a hospital, and a starched creature shot him with a needle, and he slept. He was between waking and sleeping for some time, after that, and his thinking was fuzzy, but he had a lot of time to clear it up.

Marline came in, but she was busy rehearsing a new spot they had given her, very important. Boodle and Brookley had managed it, and Boodle was busy too. They were, of course, bitterly disappointed in Sammy. After a while, when they came in he turned his head and pretended to be asleep.

When it came time to be discharged, he just sneaked out, without notifying anyone. He had a newspaper clipping in his hand when he walked into the downtown office and talked to the man in uniform.

The man knew him. "Glad to see you, Proto. The Air Corps can do something for you, I guess."

Sammy held out the clipping. "Wes Brookley says the Air Corps needs gunners. Little guys with sharp eyes."

The man said: "Gunner! You know what that means? The toughest kind of life, Proto. Gunners live tough and die quick."

Sammy said: "I haven't lived tough enough, sir. I've failed my friends—maybe I won't fail the Air Corps."

Wes Brookley had an item about it: "Sammy Proto will never be a great pugilist, but he picked a fighting branch of the armed forces. He will train at Tyndall Field to become an Air Corps gunner, and if he can learn to shoot with guns better than his right-hand shots went against the great Joe Turkin, he will get wings and kudos. . . . Marline Lovelace, new 40 Club starlet, is consoling herself with Boodle Walsh, the ten per center. . . ."

"Joe Turkin, feather champ with the big punch, is joining the Navy as a plain gob. . . . A great guy, Joe!"

At Tyndall Field, Sammy was quiet, serious, externally attentive to detail, and respectful of discipline. There were forty-five in his class, and it was amazing the way almost all the lean, medium-sized, sharp-eyed lads took to the guns. Starting with .22 revolvers, Sammy worked up to the 50's in five weeks. He went up and mastered the guns in the gale, from the rear of a pursuit. He got over swallowing his heart: he made the guns a part of him.

There was another pug, Gig Boland, a very mediocre welter, and Sammy became his friend. The gunners all looked a little alike, being smallish and possessing the same gimlet eyes, but Gig was bigger and a sort of leader. Gig and Sammy were both sent to the 3rd Bomber Command, at MacDill Field, and that was where they met the B26 medium bomber, and were put in two different crews.

Inside, Sammy had become an automaton. His duties were rigorous: eternal gun-inspection and manipulation, flights upon missions, for practice, standing by always, ready to go up, doing the routine tasks. At first it was a wrench to be parted from Gig, but soon the crew was working like clock parts.

His pilot was Charley Nelson, former All-American quarterback, a flying fool, a reckless daredevil who never cracked a landing gear but took chances like a madman. The co-pilot was Bat Jasper, soft-spoken Southern, kindly. Then there were Knockers, the radioman; Beasley, the bombardier; Horace, the navigator; Slim, the aerial engineer. These men remained together, and a wonderful new thing came into Sammy's life.

It started when they tried to transfer him. Lieutenant Jasper told him privately: "Charley just said they couldn't have you—that you're the best damn' gunner at the Field, and we aim to make the best crew going over."

That was the way Lieutenant Jasper talked, like a pal, forgetting rank. Up in the air there was little rank, anyway. They all wore wings, and their lives depended upon one another.

The pea-shooters from Drew Field would come up and engage them in mock battle very often, over the blue waters of the Gulf of Mexico, and then Charley would let loose and give them a time. Often Sammy's voice from the tail would be sharp, quartering the circle, speaking into the phone to Charley or Bat, while he handled his twin 50's with all his muscle and heart, keeping the pursuit planes lined up in his sights. He had to keep them there—he'd be dead if he didn't, he knew. He wrestled the big guns, and learned to love them. . . .

Aground he remained quiet, almost aloof. Gig Boland came to him one day, all excited, raving about a boxing tournament. "I'm in the welters, and the ground crews've got Tony Gabardine! You gotta help, Sammy."

"I've quit," said Sammy shortly. "I hung 'em up."

Gig looked hurt and started away, and just then the two lieutenants, Charley and Bat strolled over from the officers' club, chatting together. Sammy said: "Wait a minute. I can train you, Gig. I mean, I wouldn't compete myself—"

Gig won the championship for the gunners, and when Charley, Bat and the rest of the crew kept talking about it as a personal victory for them over all of MacDill, Sammy felt good—but he felt bad too. After all, Gig was a gunner. Once he mentioned that, dryly, to Lieutenant Jasper, who grinned and said: "Damn' if you ain't right, soldier! You gunners got a right to be clannish!"

SAMMY boxed with many of the gunners after that, and with some officers too. He never competed, of course; but he trained fifty men for their bouts, and was very successful as an instructor. He could have been transferred with ease to the physical instruction department, he knew. The thought was sacrilege. . . .

Then one day Lieutenants Nelson and Jasper cornered him, and Bat looked worried, but Charley said forcefully: "They're having trouble, Private Proto. Can't enlist enough gunners. The Air Corps needs 'em—bad."

Of course you don't draft gunners. Sammy knew that. It's a job only a volunteer can do. It's dangerous—glorious, but short-lived.

Lieutenant Nelson was saying bluntly: "You can help."

"How, sir?" asked Sammy promptly.

"Joe Turkin can get leave," said Charley. "Fighting as a gunner, you'd get us that publicity we need."

Jasper said quietly: "There's not much time. Just a couple of weeks. Leave can be arranged—but not much. We'll go over, soon."

Sammy said: "Yes sir. But I couldn't get in shape for Joe Turkin in two weeks, sir!"

Bat Jasper said in his kindly way: "I know. And I don't guess you can win, can you, Private Proto?"

The silence thickened, and the two young lieutenants did not break it. Sammy took a deep breath and said: "He's the better man, sir. But I'll fight him."

Bat Jasper looked queerly at Charley Nelson; then they both surveyed Sammy. Jasper said:

"Gunners got wings, pal!"

THINGS became very hectic. Sammy signed papers, waived his end of the purse to Boodle and the U.S.O. He posed beside the beloved B26, which looked, said Colonel Lee, like a huge cigar with a couple of shingles stuck in the middle and rear, very unbeautiful, but the hottest thing in the air, as everyone well knew.

He posed with the guns, squinting through the sight for a trick close-up. In no time at all he was the representative of all Army Air Corps gunners, about to do battle for the world's featherweight championship.

He trained at the camp, with Gig and some others. It was not enough training. The regular routine had him down below weight, so that was all right, but his timing was off. He could not bring it back, try as he might. His left seemed all right, but the right hand would not sharpen.

He flew to New York and tapered off there. Marline came the first day, all breathless, Boodle behind her. They seemed pale, strange people; yet his heart ached when he saw them together, and all the old feeling rushed back. It was a task to brush them off, but he managed it.

He saw them at the 40 Club that night and said: "You kids are going fine. I'm proud of you."

"Yeah," said Boodle. "We're in the dough. Sammy—"

Marline cut in. Her head was high, and she spoke rapidly: "We just want you to know. We've always been square with each other, Sammy."

"Yeah," said Boodle. His lean face was intent; he was pathetically dignified. "We'll be down there rootin' for you. But—"

Marline said: "I guess you're not really interested, Sammy. You got a far-away look in your eye. Your hair—it's all cut off. You look—different. I guess—"

Sammy got up. He was out of place in the 40 Club, as he had always felt. Only now he looked it, with his G. I. haircut and his unie, the wings proud upon his breast. He said: "I got to

leave early, you know. Best of luck to you two. It's been very fine knowing you, and I think you are both very swell."

They were trying to tell him some more, but he had enough and kept on walking out, very straight, his blue eyes sharper than ever from eternally scanning horizons. He went down where Gig awaited, and stayed there until the fight time inevitably came.

The sight of Joe Turkin made Sammy's jaw ache. The brown fists rested in Joe's lap, and he chewed his gum and looked fine. The Navy had been good for gallant Joe, all right. Those gloves would bury themselves in Sammy's body.

There was Wes Brookley, and behind him Marline and Boodle. It was funny to see Boodle down there, but it was a relief not to listen to him tonight. Marline and Boodle—the two sharp ones. Sammy wasn't sharp.

Gig said: "Well, here we go, gunner. Look, I know you got no right makin' this fight." Gig was comically serious. Down there in the seats, the crew was silent as the tomb. Charley and Bat and the others—they knew too.

Sammy broke the padding of the gloves upon his thighs. He was tanned and hard, and he was a gunner. He laughed a little. "Gunners don't have to win. They just make the best fight they can."

Gig swallowed hard and said: "You said it, pal. Here we go!"

The referee was the same as before. Sammy shook hands with Joe, and there was a different feel to it. Joe said:

"Hey, soldier! Good luck!"

Sammy said: "Attaboy, sailor!"

They really shook hands. The referee said *sotto voce*: "Remember, this is a fight! Give, in there!"

Sammy shrugged and went to the corner, testing the ropes, flexing his knees. From habit he looked down at Marline. She was wearing white, and her face matched her costume. She raised her arms very high, mitting him, so that he could distinguish the smooth, strong lines of her body. He flinched a little, but he nodded at her.

Well, he thought, no use to be sore. Everyone has his own life to figure out. Marline and Boodle had rights. As for himself, he was making a fight he couldn't win, but he had resigned himself long since to losing.

This time the bell was a release. As he wheeled and went out, everything faded. Marline, Boodle, Wes Brookley's doubting face, Gig, the lieutenants, the crew and all else went away. He just saw Joe Turkin and Joe's murderous hands, and the way Joe bullied in.

He could see much clearer than ever before. That was from so much eye-exercise, he supposed, handling the 50's. He saw Joe go into that

puzzling lunge which looked awkward and wasn't. He took them downstairs, and they hurt like sin, while he tried to fight Joe off.

He used the left, turning Joe. He chopped, and lack of timing betrayed him. Joe bullied in, bounced away, fainted and pulled the string on that right hand.

Sammy was fascinated, watching it come. He could see it all the way, but he was off-balance; he couldn't evade it. He caught it on the jaw, and the canvas was rough against his cheek as he lay on his side, staring at Joe's retreating back while sailors roared.

His neck hurt. The count was mounting, but he lay there, worried about the muscles he needed for watching out the tail of the B26. He got up at "Nine" as a matter of course, and there was Joe, coming down the lane, all fists and squinting eyes.

Sammy put a left out there and tinned. Joe was on him, loving it, wanting to fight. Gig yelled hopelessly: "Box him, gunner!"

Sammy heard everything, saw everything. He made the left stay up there, and Joe tightrope-walked in futilely. But Sammy couldn't hurt Joe, and the champion kept coming. Punches rained like big hailstones, and the round ended.

It was bad. Gig fussed with him, but Sammy only rinsed his mouth and grinned. His middle was curling up, and his neck still hurt. He listened for the bell, caught the first note, went out.

Joe threw the works in the second. Sammy fought back almost blindly, smothered in the vicious fighting of a better man. His head reeled, and after a while he knew only one thing—to stay erect as long as possible, to get up before the timekeeper slapped the canvas ten times.

ROUNDS kept going by. Joe was always there, and Sammy could always see him. Somehow, Joe's nose was bleeding. The champ's slanting eyes did not change; his style did not alter. All the way through the sixth, Joe hit him with everything but the ring posts and Sammy stayed there and took it, or went down and got up and took it.

In the seventh it was a little easier. Joe was coasting, of course. Even Joe Turkin needed to breathe sometimes. Sammy should have been grateful; and in a way, he was. He had been getting an artistic lacing. Now he stabbed with the left hand he had exercised on so many gunners in the instruction periods back at MacDill.

He would be back there soon enough, boning on the guns. He would be back among the eager, noisy gunners, planning what to do if the chamber jammed with a couple Zeros on his tail, and no time to dissemble the 50. . . .

In the eighth round, with the crowd roaring, Joe came to life and started a right hand. Sammy's left eye held a mouse above it, but he could see fine. He saw the old trick, saw Joe was a little late. He threw his own right, blindly, and the hell with timing. It was a pretty good punch, at that. It seemed to pitch Joe Turkin onto the seat of his brief pants.

Sammy leaned happily on the ropes. Now he could rest for a moment. Joe looked mighty silly and angry, sitting there, and Joe's nose bled copiously now. Sammy looked down at his own red, stained gloves. He lifted them, and the effort tired him. Four and a half more to go, and each round tougher. . . . Well—it was a job to do.

Joe got up and came like a tornado. It was no use trying to rush Joe. Sammy boxed him, retreating, letting his fists shoot out, but not going ahead. Joe hit him with a beauty, but the bell rang.

The ninth was about the same. It was funny the way Joe went down under that countering right hand. Sammy wished the earlier rounds had been better. He wished Joe was not so tough and did not keep getting up all the time.

He was ashamed of that thought. It was right for Joe Turkin to be tough and game. He was the champion, wasn't he? And a great-hearted clean boy. He almost loved Joe, swinging that mauling right.

Gig was saying something. Gig was saying: "This is the twelfth, gunner! This is the big round! Give it to him, gunner. What a fight! What a battle!"

Down there in the seats, Brookley was quiet, his eyes very bright upon Sammy. Booodle was biting his nails, and his hair was mussed and his necktie awry. Marline just stared, dry-eyed, white-faced, hands writhing, gesturing at Sammy to do something or other.

They must be crazy, thought Sammy. Why was the crowd so quiet? It was a fast fight, all the way, with plenty knockdowns. Sammy bet he had been down himself a half dozen times. He asked Gig about it.

"Six!" said Gig. "Six each!"

Sammy said: "Each? Joe too?"

"This is it!" said Gig again. "The big one!"

Sammy digested this slowly. He looked for the crew. The two lieutenants were leaning forward, tense, watchful, no emotions, just those eyes, boring into him. Jasper held up his fist, thumb down, but he did not grin. Sammy wiped the blood from his lips—it kept bubbling out from the cut inside where his teeth had bitten his cheeks.

The twelfth—and he had a chance. He saw Joe get up at the whistle, lean forward a little. Sammy didn't get up.



Illustrated by Raymond Sisley

The man in uniform knew him. "Glad to see you, Proto. The Air Corps can do something for you, I guess."

"We just had to say we were with you, Sammy," said Marline.



He needed those ten seconds. . . . There it was, clanging!

He pitched forward. His legs were gone, but his momentum carried him to ring center. His head locked on Joe's shoulder. He did not grab and hold. Joe did not attempt to wrestle. They drew in their elbows, humped their backs. They pitched leather.

The noise began at ringside, spread to every corner. It grew and grew. Sammy's arms were going to drop off on the ring floor, and then everyone would be astounded. . . . He chucked the short ones in there with all he had, and more than he knew he had.

Joe was on him. Then Joe was bouncing away, and it was that old, familiar routine, Joe dancing, looking

for a shot. Sammy reached back with his clumsy, heavy right hand. He threw it like chucking a grenade. It went splash against Joe's bloody face.

Joe's knees buckled; he went half-way down. Sammy stepped back, dropping his hands. A fan yelled: "You dope! Kill the sailor!"

Sammy stood waiting. Joe got his knees braced. He reached out and touched gloves with Sammy. He threw his Sunday right hand. Sammy ducked under it and laced tired jolts to Joe's ribs. The bell sounded, and they stood there, each using the other for a prop, utterly finished, unable to step away.

Joe mumbled: "Gunner!"

"Ugh!" said Sammy.

"You're—the best—I ever fight—"

The seconds came then, and Gig carried Sammy's torso, and Sammy's legs dragged. The referee collected the slips very swiftly. He stood stock still in ring center, not hesitating for a moment. He raised both arms and said: "The result—" And the crowd took it up, yelling him down, even the sailors and Air Corps men.

"A draw!"

In the dressing-room it was not peaceful. Wes Brookley said hand-somely: "Man and boy, in twenty years of watching fights, that was the best and the closest. You're a game, battling fool, Sammy Proto!"

There were others, almost awesome in their praise, shaking their heads.



*Sammy said:
"Hey! This isn't
right! Let me
get it straight!"*

It had, Sammy guessed, been a good fight. He hoped Joe was all right. He remembered now, for the first time, his jaw, after the initial engagement with Joe. He hoped Joe wasn't hurt. . . .

Gig got them all out, after a while. There was only Booodle and Marline, and Gig went outside to tell the crew to go down to the 40 Club for the party. Sammy was saying: "Hey! Who fought Joe—you or me?"

Marline said: "Look, Sammy dear. We had to tell you—even if you're off us—what a great guy you are—always were. You never squawked when Joe beat you, and you came back and showed us. We always knew, of course."

Booodle said: "I know we rushed you into that first match, and I don't blame you for bein' sore. But you oughta be nice to Marline, Sammy. Even if you're a big hero now, and all—she always was crazy about you."

"And we just had to say we were with you," said Marline. She was weeping. They had thought all the time that he was angry with them, had deserted them. They had believed him derelict to their common bond, their beginnings, all they had been to each other.

Sammy said: "Hey! This isn't right! I'm a lug! I'm no good! Hey—let me get it straight!"

Later, when it was all straight, Booodle sighed deeply. The lieuten-

ants, of course, didn't sit at the table with the enlisted men, but they were at the next one, and they were really howling their pride and glee. Booodle said:

"Those wings! Sammy, tell a pal. How do I get them?"

"You go down and ask the man," said Sammy. He frowned. "You're kind of tall. But you got good eyes, I remember, from the old basketball-team days."

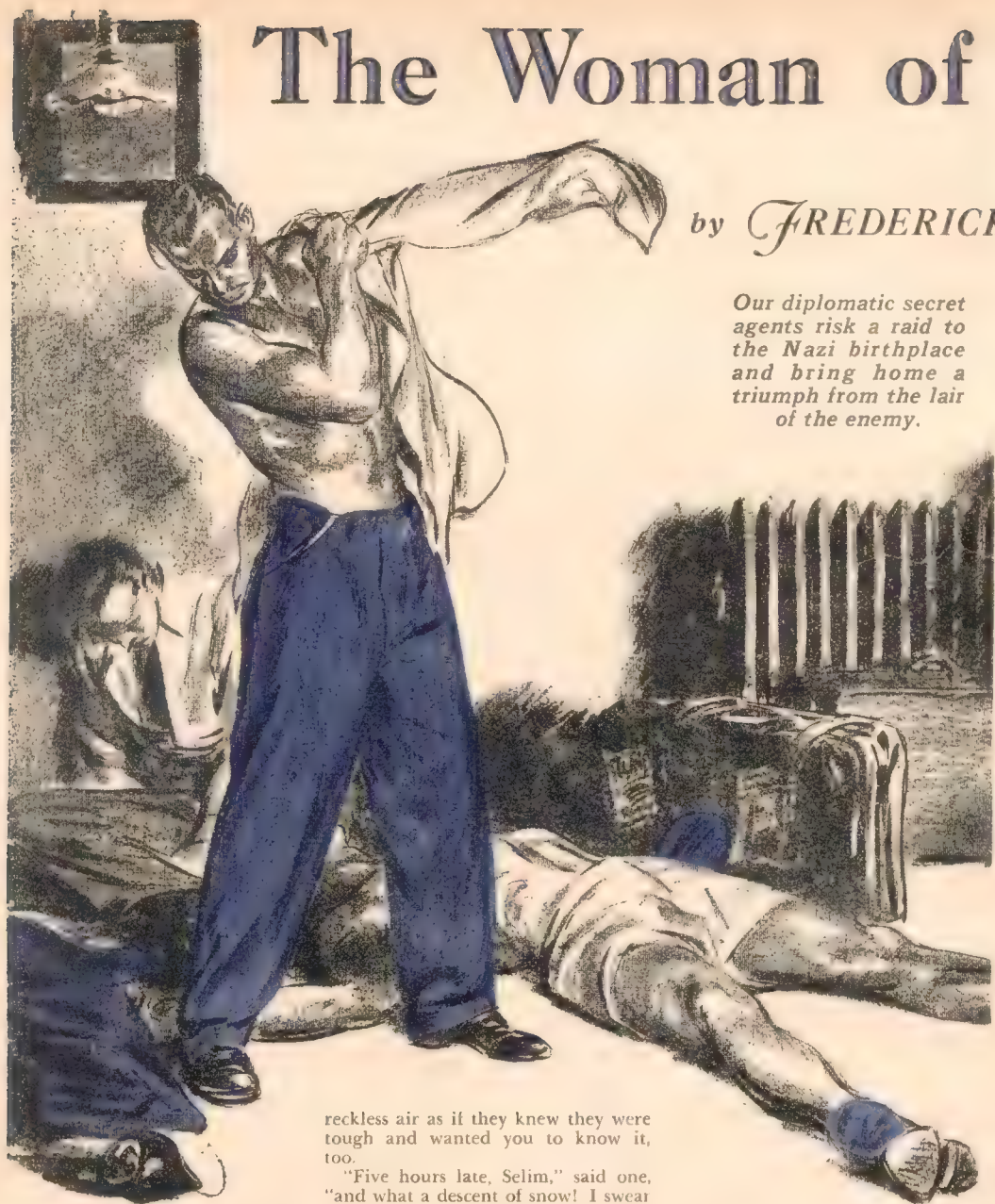
Marline was singing her specialty number. It was "I Got a Gunner with Wings."

Sammy would never be happier than this moment. Never—until he got back to his 50's, up there in the blue, riding the tail of the old B26.

The Woman of

by FREDERICK

Our diplomatic secret agents risk a raid to the Nazi birthplace and bring home a triumph from the lair of the enemy.



THE Rome-Berlin Express steamed noisily into the Badischer Bahnhof at a quarter after five that winter afternoon. In the second-class compartment of the coach that had been shifted from the Simplon-Orient train at Pedizza, two men peered out at the blaze of light and activity. They were dark, these two, young; and they had about them a shifty,

reckless air as if they knew they were tough and wanted you to know it, too.

"Five hours late, Selim," said one, "and what a descent of snow! I swear by Allah I don't see how these Swiss can crawl out from under it."

The swarthy man called Selim nodded indifferently. "We had better eat well here, Hussein. I was told by one who understands such matters that in Germany one seldom has meat. Think of us living for five weeks without *cous-cous*."

Before he called Hussein could reply, the sliding door of the compartment opened. A tall man muffled

to the eyebrows in greatcoat and muffler and wearing the uniform cap of the Swiss customs, gestured to them.

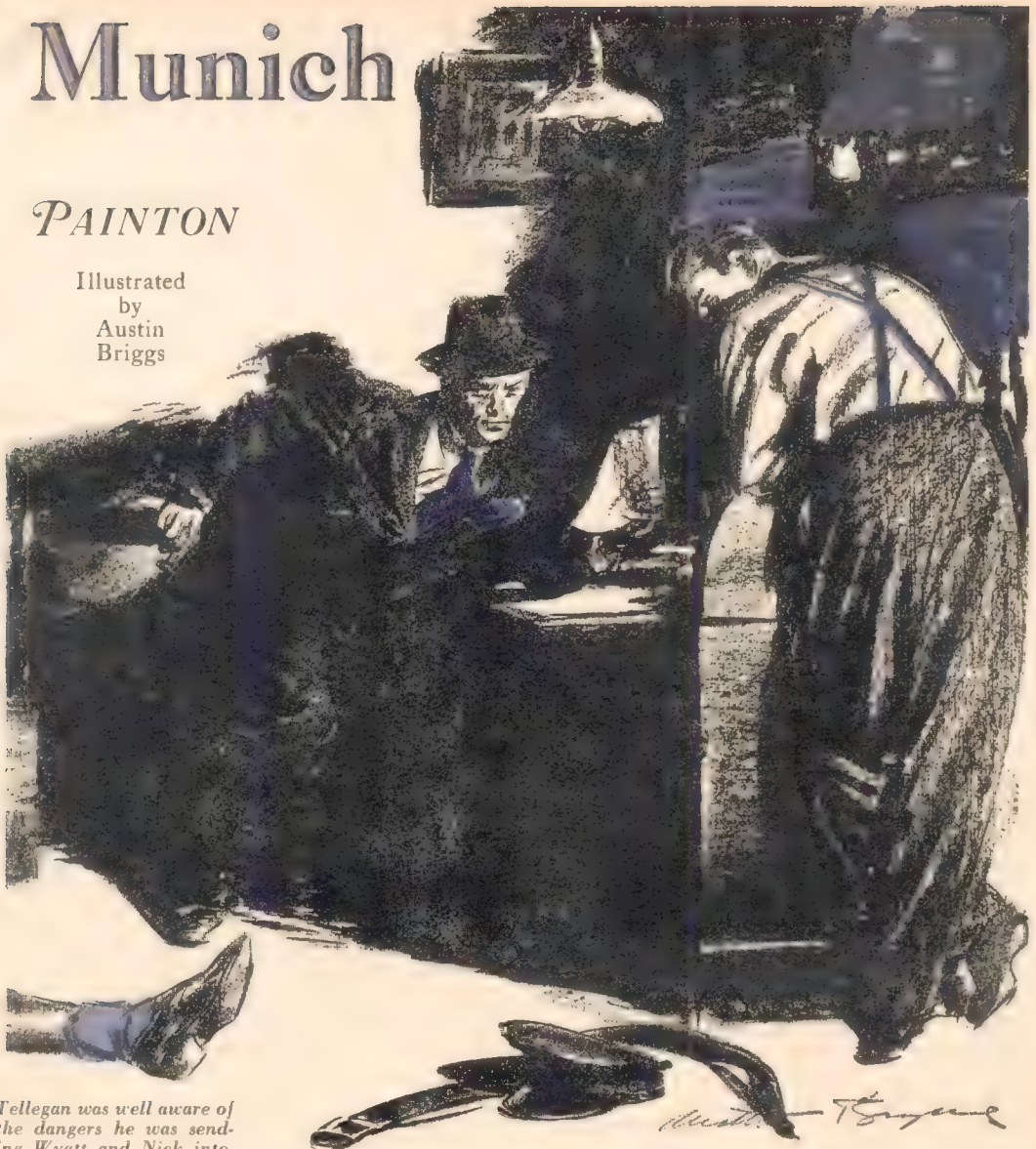
"One must descend here, *Herren*," he said politely. "We must inspect your baggage and pass you over the German frontier. *Bitte*."

"*Sehr gut!*" said Hussein, his arrogant Arab attitude becoming haughty. "Lead the way."

Munich

PAINTON

Illustrated
by
Austin
Briggs



Tellegan was well aware of the dangers he was sending Wyatt and Nick into.

The two got their luggage and followed the tall customs official past a *buvette* where several passengers already were eating vast slabs of bread and sausage, and drinking steaming coffee. Selim licked his lips. "We will eat after this accursed officer is through, eh, son of my sheik?"

Hussein nodded. "If you like." Suddenly he scowled. "You—Officer—why do you take us here? Is not that the customs office over there?"

The tall customs man smiled. "Herren, that is the regular office. There, one cannot hide tobacco, coffee

or other luxury one wishes to take into Germany, where luxuries are few."

He thrust on a door that opened into a brightly lit office far in the rear of the *Bahnhof*.

"In here, *bitte, Herren!* And you will not be too displeased by the result."

Selim and Hussein exchanged smiles. This would cost something, but it would make the smuggling simpler. They strode briskly in.

The tall customs officer carefully shut the door. He locked it with a quick unobtrusive gesture and turned. Two men sat behind desks. The desks

were dusty, but neither Selim nor Hussein noticed that.

"Now, *mein Herr*," said the tall customs man, "*bitte*, your bag."

Selim turned. He had a split-second view of a blurred fist streaking for his chin. Then there was a grisly thud. As Selim started to drop, the tall officer caught him.

Young arrogant Hussein heard, whirled.

"In the name of Allah!" he shouted, but he said no more. From behind the desk a young man had bounded. He too had swung his fist. And after the *thuck* of the blow striking Hussein's

chin, the young man eased the senseless Hussein to the floor.

"That's a neat right hook, Handsome," said the tall officer, carefully laying out the senseless Selim. "Only, you've got to improve your timing. He almost ducked that."

He shed his clothing to reveal himself red-haired, freckled, with the scarred skin of an ex-pug.

Jason Wyatt stretched out the Turk he had knocked out.

"Probably you're right, Sunburn," he said. "Now, Marse Jim, let's have that hypodermic needle. We've got only twelve minutes before the train leaves."

Major James Tellegan, head of the American Diplomatic Secret Service, took out the glass hypo-needle, wiped down the steel with alcohol.

"Very well," he said, "a half to each."

Wyatt nodded, bared the left arms of the two men and shot half the hypodermic contents into each. The drug was guaranteed to keep the two senseless for at least twelve hours.

"Marse Jim, the passports," Wyatt said. "Sunburn, get Nick in here."

The place then was full of silent hurry. Tellegan began to steam off the photographs in the two Turkish passports and substitute the two photos of Wyatt and the young Turk called Nick whose name was Achmed ibn Saad Nika el Orfali.

Sunburn stripped one body naked. Nick removed the clothes from the other. Nick was not over twenty-five, tall for a Turk, slim as a rapier, with dark flashing eyes, white even teeth and curling dark hair. Before going into the Turkish secret service he had been the only motion-picture actor in all Turkey. Now he was excited, his warm golden skin flushed.

"One can say, Effendi," he murmured to Tellegan, "that thou hast much cunning, and if all else goes as well, then our mission is as good as done."

Tellegan nodded but did not reply. He was too well aware of the dangers he was sending Wyatt and Nick into to try to cover it up with a careless word.

AT last Wyatt stood erect in the clothes Selim el Sakr had worn. Now came Nick to stand beside him. No one in Germany knew what the real Selim and Hussein looked like. And the passports now carried Wyatt's and Nick's pictures.

The pockets of the two carried papers that could be studied at leisure. Now Sunburn darted out with the two bags to have them chalked and okayed. Tellegan turned to have a last word with Wyatt and Nick.

Tellegan, always lean and pale, seemed more tired than ever. He held out his hand to Wyatt.

"Jason, the balance of the Middle East depends on you getting the truth in this Nazi school of sabotage. If this were not the fact I would not let you take this risk."

"I do not think the risk is too great," said Wyatt. "Once we're past the frontier—and—"

"He is clever," said Nick admiringly; "we are safe. And once I can tell Saracoglu Effendi that the Germans are treacherously preparing to sabotage Turkey, German influence in Turkey is destroyed. But yes."

Tellegan was silent, but Wyatt knew he was thinking. The United Nations were moving heaven and earth to keep Turkey from going over to Germany. If Turkey yielded, Russia was outflanked; so was Suez; and a German drive through Iran and Iraq to the Persian Gulf would be made easy.

Indeed, as Wyatt could well see, only Turkey's steadfast refusal to yield German troops free passage across Turkey was saving Germany and Japan from shaking hands on the Indian Ocean and administering the United Nations a disastrous defeat.

Lately Turkey seemed to be leaning toward the Nazis. Von Papen was feverishly intriguing to bring her the whole way. Then Tellegan got his brilliant idea. He knew the Germans had a big school of sabotage at Munich. He knew, too, the Nazi mentality that would prepare to blow up Turkish installations if all else failed. So the whole Allied Secret Service in the Middle East dug deeply to uncover two Turkish traitors who were in Nazi pay. Selim and Hussein el Orfali were those two. Better yet, they were found just as the Nazi Gestapo agents in Istanbul were sending the two to the Nazi sabotage school in Munich to learn how to destroy in case Hitler decided to invade Turkey and crush her.

So the scheme to seize the two at Basel on the German-Swiss frontier was planned—and now carried out. The Turkish Secret Service, wanting proof of Nazi treachery, had assigned Nick. The trip to Munich was risky, but the proof would hold Turkey in line during this crisis. The dangers had to be taken. And Wyatt, who spoke both German and Arabic, was logically chosen.

He patted Tellegan's thin shoulder. "You've planned well, Marse Jim," he said. "Nick and I will be back in five weeks."

At this juncture Sunburn returned. "Okay, you guys," he growled. "Train leaves in two minutes." Suddenly he cursed. "Dammit, this is the first time. Handsome, you've gone without me and I don't like it. You'll get yourself killed."

Wyatt laughed and shook hands.

"My job is to get Nick into Germany and out. How far would I

get, taking along you and your bedroom French?"

Everybody laughed at this, not because it was funny but because it broke the tension.

A shout echoed through the *Bahnhof*: "*En voiture, mesdames et messieurs!*"

Tellegan's mouth tightened. "I'll keep these two tied and drugged until you come back," he said. "Good luck and—good luck."

Wyatt and Nick climbed into the second-class coach, snuggled under the blankets for warmth. Against the window the snow beat with tiny drumming fingers. Now the engine whistle shrilled mournfully across the night. The train slid out of the *Bahnhof*.

Nick peered out, not back toward the Rhine River but ahead across the darkness of the Schwarzwald.

"We are in the hands of Allah (upon whom be prayers), my friend," he said. "But you Americans—I admire you—I will help all I can against these Nazi dogs."

The train sped smoothly through the barbed wires and concrete fortifications across the German frontier.

WYATT'S reception in Munich astounded him. On the train, blacked out and slow along the Rhine, he and Nick had been severely interrogated by the Gestapo, hauled out of berths and treated even insolently. But here in Bavaria the Gestapo and officials were eagerly courteous. At the *Bahnhof* the Gestapo officer scarcely looked at their passports and credentials.

"Welcome to Germany!" he said, as he scrawled his signature to their passes. "Reservations have been made for you at the Stadthof. You will report Monday at the school which *Fraülein Doktor Valeska* maintains in the *Friederichstrasse*, number eighteen. Your ration cards are for 'heavy workers,'" he added winking broadly, "so you will eat well and get plenty of fuel allowance."

Outside, a black-garbed S.S. trooper saluted smartly and led them to a car. Gasoline was scarce in Germany; not a civilian car rolled. Yet this car was assigned to take them scarcely four blocks! Nick was impressed.

In Arabic he muttered to Wyatt: "These Germans, now, my friend, they do little things well. They plan and prepare to small details. That is much in waging war."

Wyatt smiled grimly, staring out at the snow-covered streets, the few persons walking swiftly in the pale winter sunshine.

"Yes," he replied in Arabic, "the German is the master of detailed planning. He never makes little mistakes, Nick. When he makes one it is nothing trivial. See those people with poor clothing against winter cold.

See the odd waxen polish to the skin—the sign of malnutrition. That was Hitler's first mistake—ignoring the blockade of Britain

"See those mourning clothes and arm-bands! Almost every other person. That was mistake number two—attacking the Russians. Yes, for small things the German is a genius."

Nick nodded. "I perceive your clever truths. Allah does not aid this Hitler."

At the hotel they found the temperature inside barely above freezing. People stood around the fat-bellied stoves and wore many clothes. The lunch was bad, a single little fish that Wyatt said had been kidnaped from its parents while a baby.

Wyatt examined each bit of food. "Look," he muttered to Nick, "this bread—"

"Horrible!" shuddered Nick. "It tastes sour and bitter—"

"It's black bread," said Wyatt, "but I didn't mean that. On the sides, you see those little bits of stuff clinging. That's sawdust. The baker has no grease or fat to keep the bread from sticking to the baking surface and uses sawdust so it breaks loose easily."

Nick understood. "Then the rumor is true—Germany is desperately short of fats. Is that what you mean?"

Wyatt nodded. Once again as he stood up he felt the empty hunger that was always with him in the war nations where food was scarce and rationed. If this was the "heavy worker" diet, then what in God's name did the lesser people eat?

The black-uniformed S.S. trooper took them by car to the school. The way led past the famous Braun Haus where Hitler first conspired to seize Germany, then Europe, then the world. Wyatt stared at the place bitterly; he was thinking of the miserable, the sick, the destitute and the white faces of the dead he had seen.

THE car drew up before a huge stone house, surrounded by a high iron fence. A striped sentry box was near the entrance and two steel-helmeted guards goose-stepped a sentry-go.

"Inside," said the S.S. man, "I will present you to Fräulein Doktor. She is a great and famous person. You are honored that she wishes to see you personally."

For an instant a cold hand closed on Wyatt's heart. Why should this woman director of a sabotage school wish to see them?

They entered a big corridor where a score or so of men and women

moved in and out of different rooms. Then the S.S. man opened a door, gestured, and Wyatt and Nick passed inside.

Before them stood the most remarkable woman Wyatt had ever seen.

The sun outside shone through white curtains upon her. She was not young; Wyatt put her down as at least forty-seven, perhaps even fifty. Her hair was snow white, but her face was strangely youthful and unlined; and her figure was slim and girlish. Only her eyes were old and tired. It was like a witch peering coldly out of the body of a beautiful girl whose soul she had stolen.

The guide shot out his right arm "Heil Hitler!" he cried the enforced greeting. "The two students from Istanbul. Fräulein Doktor! All their paper are in order."

At the words "Fräulein Doktor, Wyatt barely repressed a start of utter amazement.

Fräulein Doktor! Could this be the infamous "Mademoiselle le Docteur," the legendary female spy of the First

"Heil Hitler!"
cried the guide.
"Here are the two
new students."





Elsbeth's voice rang out: "You killed him, Mother, so I shouldn't have him."

World War? The woman who had run a spy school in Brussels so brilliantly that British Intelligence and the French Deuxième Bureau put a price of one million francs gold on her head, dead or alive?

Wyatt studied her again; yes, he was right about her age. Her beauty even now told of the stunning loveliness she must have possessed when Hauptmann Carl Von Wynanky of the Imperial Hussars had fallen madly in love with her.

But the American dossier of German Secret Service had said that "Mademoiselle le Docteur" was confined in a Swiss madhouse as a consequence of taking drugs. Was this, then, the once-magnificent Annemarie Lesser? He could not now tell and dare not speculate, for her eyes were on him coldly and seemed to pull aside the mask of his face and look inside.

She was saying, "*Herren*, I welcome you to our little group that can and does do so much." Her voice was low, cold, and her German classical in its purity. "You can begin tomorrow as a new class has just been formed. You—" She broke off and turned; into the room from another door had come four persons. With their entry the atmosphere of the room changed, and an instant later began a tense terrible drama that was to have enormous consequences for Nick and Wyatt.

This golden-haired sleek youth—Wyatt learned that his name was

Erich Krausse—was so handsome it was startling. Wyatt knew of him, of course. All the world had seen him as the magnificent singer in "*Tristan und Isolde*" which French Gaumont photographed in 1939. He had been hailed as Germany's greatest tenor.

He was indolent, insolent, haughty, but magnificent enough to pose for Praxiteles. And as Wyatt saw the look Fräulein Doktor gave him, the young American secret agent knew the truth. She madly loved this cinema star turned spy.

An instant later Wyatt knew the chap was even lower than a spy. He was an *agent provocateur*. He went to neutral and Allied countries, shamelessly made love to the wives and mistresses of the friendly nations' leaders, and reported what they told him to Hitler.

It was the acme of Nazi efficiency in getting the truth.

WYATT saw Nick's young mouth curl as he learned this. Wyatt nudged him to remain silent, not call attention to their presence. For a young dark girl said: "Aunty Sumilla, we're going skiing. The south run is perfect."

Her hand clung to Erich's as she spoke. If she was not in love with the blond god, then she was infatuated. Wyatt noticed this only casually because another thought had leaped across his mind. This dark girl, this Elspeth von Eppen, looked

enough like Fräulein Doktor to be her daughter.

And, by God, the famous Annemarie Lesser had had a daughter by Captain Von Wynanky—though to stop scandal the Prussian count had announced a still birth!

If Wyatt had doubted before that this white-haired woman was the "Mademoiselle le Docteur of 1918"—the woman who had worn soldier attire into the very headquarters of the French Secret Service—he doubted no more. This was Fräulein Doktor's illegitimate daughter.

And the most amazing revelation of all was that Fräulein Doktor was madly jealous of her own daughter! And it was no wonder because the glances that Erich Krausse gave the beautiful young girl had hidden fire—and not so hidden at that.

Wyatt had learned—and the hard way—that human relations and emotions were the tools of the secret agent. He wondered how he could turn this situation to his advantage.

In a cold voice Fräulein Doktor said: "Karel will take you skiing. That is his duty as your promised husband. Erich will stay here to talk to the Rumanian class on the latest romance of Ion Ionescu."

Wyatt suppressed a grin. Good Lord, what people these Nazis were! Ionescu, Rumanian premier and dictator, had forced a quarter of a million Rumanian soldiers to go to the Russian front to fight beside the

Nazis. Yet evidence to smash him was being gathered, and if he balked, the Nazis would laugh and crush him.

Now he looked at the fiancé of Elspeth von Eppen. Karel Karolyi was the man's name—a Hungarian, obviously, and a damned keen-looking man. Curly hair, dark skin, alive, nervous eyes—and, it was evident, passionately in love with Elspeth von Eppen.

When this explosion came it would be nothing trivial. Wyatt began scheming to use it.

A moment later Fräulein Doktor's eyes were coldly on him. She smiled mechanically.

"*Effendis*," she said in Turkish as flawless as her German, "there is no need for you to remain now. See beautiful Munich and come tomorrow, and with Allah's help (and on Him be peace) we will help you learn to free Turkey from the fools above. *Salaam aleikum*."

Wyatt found himself with Nick in the snow and blue dusk of early winter afternoon.

"I think," grinned Wyatt, "we are about to tap a gold mine."

Nick did not reply. Wyatt wheeled. The young Turk was staring at the magnificent mountains against the pale dying sun.

"Wyatt Effendi," he said dreamily, "she—that *sitt* Elspeth—she is lovely beyond all words or dreams."

Wyatt barely clamped his teeth on a cry of vexation.

Good God, Nick enamored of that sleek-haired houri! That was dangerous. Damned dangerous!

THE next few days were a revelation to Wyatt. Fräulein Doktor was nothing short of genius in teaching methods to destroy without being caught. She had chemists and physicists to perform the experiments but it was she who lectured on opportunity and planning.

There was, for instance, the class on delayed bombs to wreck factories, blow up ships and otherwise create turmoil and confusion. Wyatt sat in a side-arm chair exactly as if he were in college; and listened entranced.

"The two compounds—in this case to make fire," she said in her precise voice, "are sulphuric acid and another acid.* They are, as you can see, separated from each other by a plug of metal. Now, this metal is copper which is eaten by the sulphuric acid. You can see the acid right now at work. As soon as the sulphuric acid has eaten through the copper plug, the two acids collide and by virtue of their characteristics burst into immediate explosion and flame."

*For obvious reasons—and obeying an F.B.I. request—the exact chemical compound is not given here, although in the author's possession.

She paused. The instrument of destruction was no bigger than a cigar and most innocent in appearance.

"The greatest virtue of this means of causing fire and explosion," Fräulein Doktor went on, "is that the time of the fire or explosion can be definitely fixed in advance. How? The rate at which the sulphuric acid can eat through the copper plug is precisely known. Thus you establish the time of explosion by controlling the thickness of the copper plug you insert. In the last war one of our most famous agents, Frederick Joubert Duquesne, was able to plant such a bomb on the British steamship *Clyde*. She did not blow up and catch fire until after she had been at sea three days and was beyond all help."

Wyatt's eyes thinned. He remembered reading about that job in his indoctrination course. Six hundred passengers had gone down off the Brazilian coast. . . .

She was equally brilliant in the course on arson. Before their eyes, she made a "fire-pencil."

"The advantage of the pencil," she said, "is that you can carry it upon you with impunity. For it is a pencil to all outward seeming. Look!" She held up what seemed to Wyatt an ordinary pencil. She even wrote a few words—"Gott strafe England"—with it.

"But regard," she continued, and suddenly broke the point. For a moment nothing happened. Then a few white fumes gushed forth. There followed a flash of flame, and a slight roar of chemicals disintegrating. Suddenly out of the broken end of the pencil poured a cone of pure white flame.

"Two thousand degrees Fahrenheit," she said calmly, "and it will burn for some seventy to eighty seconds. How did I make this flame? When I broke the pencil point, I also broke a tube of sulphuric acid that immediately passed on to mix with other chemicals through a capillary tube. The mixture causes spontaneous combustion, and a white-hot flame as you can see. This pencil can be broken, dropped through the open hatch of a ship's hold, dropped in a building, a factory—any place, in fact, where there are combustible materials."

In fascination Wyatt watched while she told of the inflammable paper that had phosphorus that burst into flame when given certain chemical treatment.

"Now," she went on, "you will be given the ingredients to make these weapons to destroy our enemies."

Wyatt later was to learn how to change toolmaker's jigs infinitesimal fractions of an inch to render useless the war weapons they made. He learned about carborundum in a crankcase, powdered sugar in gasoline to gum up a carburetor. Chunks of

dynamite and T.N.T. painted black and placed in coal-bunkers, she explained, wrecked factories quite well.

It was all appallingly efficient, and the men and women students, dregs or fanatics, absorbed it. And Wyatt, in growing apprehension, perceived that if this went on long the disaster to the Allied cause would be dreadful.

Night after night he planned how this industrial carnage could be avoided.

"The answer," he muttered, "is to get the lists of saboteurs out of the files, make microphotographs—and notify the secret police of each nation, friendly or enemy."

He spoke to Nick about it.

"You've got all the proof you need that the Nazis are going to blast your factories," he argued; "why not help me to save the rest of the Balkans?"

NICK paused in the act of spraying himself with perfume. It was the one Turkish trait about him that Wyatt thoroughly disliked.

"My friend," said Nick, "you have done what your government promised. I know these treacherous Nazi dogs and what they intend. But I will not help you on the files, for that would mean danger to Elspeth and her aunt, and I will not have them harmed."

Wyatt suppressed a groan. "You are, then," he said carefully, "in love?"

"I worship that *sitt*," said Nick. "My mother was Circassian of surpassing beauty. Her friend was a Georgian like Elspeth in loveliness and her I adored in my boyhood."

He paused. Then: "I would take Elspeth away with me." He said no more save, "Allah be with thee"—and went out.

Wyatt knew then he must do this thing alone. . . .

The very efficiency of the German Gestapo amazed him. For in Fräulein Doktor's office were carefully docketed the cards and records of every person who had ever passed through the school. The files were locked, of course, and Fräulein Doktor kept the key on a little gold chain around her neck. But the files could be forced. The difficulty was in getting in. Every person was checked out of the high gate each day by two guards. At night there were three more.

While Wyatt was considering this problem a strange thing happened. Fräulein Doktor who, of course, came and went as she pleased, requested him to remain after dismissal.

"Herr Selim Effendi," she hastily shifted to Arabic, "an unpleasant matter comes to me—the attentions of your compatriot, Hussein, for my niece Elspeth."

Wyatt took no alarm. Not then.

"*Sitt*," he growled. "That a true believer can love an infidel is impossible. So I have told Hussein."

"Then please tell him also to avoid her. Tell him if he does not that he must answer to Karel Karolyi."

For the first time Wyatt sensed a method to all this. But he only answered: "The Hungarian dog and his fate are nothing to me. Hussein is my friend, and I would save him from a foolish wench."

Fräulein Doktor stood there, playing with the little gold chain that revealed itself against the black velvet collar she constantly wore.

"Very well," she said, "you carry my word. *Salaam aleikum.*"

Wyatt bowed jerkily, went out. But he did not leave the building. Indeed, he stopped there in the hall after loudly banging the door that led to the vestibule. A swift complete plan had gripped him and he would strike now, while opportunity offered the last chance.

He stepped into the little sitting-room adjacent to Fräulein Doktor's office. He became immediately aware of her voice and that of Elspeth von Eppen. He listened in horror.

Elspeth was saying, "I tell you it is the truth, Mother. These two are not Turks but British—or American—secret agents, sent here to report on this school. This fool calling himself Hussein—he is Nick—confessed it. I gave him the ethyl-chloride solution—then the drug—and he spoke outright."

Whatever Fräulein Doktor said Wyatt never heard. The roaring in his ears became cyclonic.

Betrayed! Trapped. By the old device of a beautiful *agent provocateur* and drugs—and probably a blood-pressure instrument as well. Nick was mad—insane! The infatuation for this girl had cost them both their lives.

Forgotten now were the files. All Wyatt could think of was escape! Escape with Nick, of course—curse him!—because the Turk had to return to convince Saracoglu of Nazi treachery. But how to escape?

Fräulein Doktor would summon the Gestapo! And no man alive could cross Bavaria and pass the strict Nazi frontier guard when the Gestapo was in close pursuit. Yet there was no other way out of Germany.

SUDDENLY his attention was caught by Fräulein Doktor's voice.

"Elspeth, you know I care a great deal for Erich—that he is the only incentive I have to go on living—that and to rectify the loss in 1918. Why do you torment me by leading him on? You can't love him. He is too selfish, too arrogant for you who can have many men. Such as he are only for—for women like myself in whom—God help us!—the ashes are not entirely cold."

"Nonsense, Mother, he is young enough to be your son. Besides, he interests me. He says I can have a

cinema career. And he is—is magnificent."

"Elspeth!" To Wyatt's surprise, the cold voice was hot with anger, tears, sorrow.

"Don't take that attitude, Mother. You leave me alone for seventeen years. I'm told you're dead. Then you return and teach me how to make men fools and tell the things that they try to hide. I have learned your lessons well, Mother. I take what I want."

"I taught you to make men talk because that is a duty you owe to the *Vaterland*, to *der Fuehrer*, to me—because we failed before and this time cannot and will not fail—"

"Mother, I am twenty-four. I do as I please!"

There was a door click. Then a woman's soft sob. Silence! For the quiet Wyatt was grateful. He had to make a quick plan—and there must be no mistakes. Vaguely in the next ten minutes he heard Fräulein Doktor make some telephone calls. He could not tell to whom she talked.

But by now he had made his plan. Darkness had fallen, and against the window-pane behind him the snow drummed with ghostly fingers and the wind moaned in rising cadence. Good! Such weather would be excellent cover if needed. Now he drew his gun. But before he could open the door to Fräulein Doktor's office a man's voice stayed his hand.

"Annemarie!" came Erich Krausse's arrogant tones. "What's this—tears again? Damnation—you know how I hate scenes."

"There will be none, Erich." Her voice was low, cool. "I am appealing to your gratitude if not your love. I am old and I love you—and I must have it my way. I took you out of a *Bierstube*, and I used my influence with Herr Himmeler to get you your chance in the opera and a musical career. I provided for you, used Hitler's gratitude to me to—"

"Enough—for *Herr Gott's* sake!" said Erich. "Must I endure this recital every time you are jealous?"

"Have I the right to be jealous?"

"Annemarie!" There was a sudden coarse, harsh note in the man's voice. "Let's end this. I love Elspeth. I intend to marry her. You will have a son but no lover. Won't that suffice?"

"No!" said Fräulein Doktor. "And I see from your face, Erich, that further talk is useless. I perceive that as the Bible says, a nurtured snake will bite. Well, Erich, you will bite no more."

"Annemarie! *Herr Gott!* Are you gone mad? Put down that—"

The shot was muffled, deadened. Wyatt, from the sounds, knew the singer had rushed Fräulein Doktor, had missed a wild grab for the gun. Now there was a second or so of dreadful silence. Then a heavy thud.

Wyatt's first impulse was to rush into the woman's office. But a second's thought stopped him. He suddenly realized that this woman was carrying out a premeditated, carefully planned murder. He must know her next steps before he betrayed his hand.

IT was as well that he remained where he was. There were footprints in the hall, then a door opened. Wyatt started violently.

Nick's voice said in his charming but bad accent, "You asked to see me, Fräulein Doktor?"

"You alone," said the older woman, "not Elspeth, too."

"Oh, but Aunt Sumilla, you—" There was a muffled scream. Then: "Erich! *Ach, Gott!*"

Nick said, "The man is dead. He has been shot. Allah's grace upon him!"

"He will need Allah's grace, and all else of mercy," Fräulein Doktor said. "And so, *mein Herr*, will you. I learn you are an enemy agent. I called you here to say so. Now I send for the police to charge you also with murder."

Wyatt took a firmer grip on the pistol butt. So! That was the game. She would turn Nick and Wyatt in as agents and say that Erich had been killed in some fancied melée.

Inextricably now, her threads were closing about Nick and Wyatt. Still Wyatt delayed his entrance another few seconds.

Elspeth von Eppen's voice rang out: "You did it, Mother! You killed him so I shouldn't have him. You did it deliberately."

Fräulein Doktor said, "Elspeth, you have learned a great lesson. Profit by it. Women meant for such tasks as ours should never weaken to any man. I have done so, and will never do it again. Erich was a rotter, a thief, an arrogant guttersnipe. The only thing that will be missed is his singing of 'Tristan'."

She broke off, her voice hard, unrelenting. In the hallway now came a heavier pair of steps, the cold breath of the snowy night.

"Stand where you are, you Turkish swine," said Fräulein Doktor. Then, as a door opened, "*Ach, gut, Feldwebel!* Here is one of your prisoners. The other is doubtless at the hotel. They are enemy agents. This one murdered our very dear instructor, Erich Krausse, as you can see."

"Fräulein Doktor," said a deep voice, "this *Schweinhund* will pay for that with his head."

"Mother!" cried Elspeth. "Young lady, I am your aunt. Please remember, shocked though you are, that I—"

"Aunt Sumilla, I'll tell the truth—" "Listen here,"—this was Nick,— "I did not kill this man—"

Her voice dominant, Fräulein Doktor stifled both of them.

"Elspeth, I love you as all the flesh and blood I have left in this world. So be quiet, and all will be well."

Wyatt heard sounds of steel, Nick's curse in Arabic. Wyatt knew he had waited long enough. He opened the door, and with his gun leveled ahead of him, went into the room.

"Bitte," he said pleasantly, "I have heard this wonderful scheme of yours, Fräulein Doktor. And I feel compelled to say that this *Feldwebel* should be able to report to Herr Hitler that you shot one of his favorite singers."

Wyatt had his back to the wall and well he did. For to his amazement the Gestapo *Feldwebel* hurled Nick spinning toward him, his hand meanwhile streaking for his Luger automatic. The man was lightning-fast and his gun was up and leveled before Wyatt actually sensed the man's intention.

Just a divided second ahead of the Gestapo man, Wyatt pulled the trigger. He took no chances. Even at eight feet he aimed for the bigness of the man's body. It was good shooting. A fleck of black cloth leaped from the man's tunic. A few flecks of blood followed. He leaned backward, then fell forward stiffly and with a resounding crash. He was dead before he hit the floor.

WYATT whirled—and just in time. Fräulein Doktor had jerked out the pistol that had killed Erich.

"Ni, ni," Wyatt shook his head. "You know I would not hesitate."

She looked into his eyes and knew he would shoot instantly. She put down the gun.

Wyatt gestured to Nick.

"Get her gun. Then get the keys to those handcuffs from the *Feldwebel*."

Nick, despite the steel cuffs, did so. Fräulein Doktor said: "*Mein Herr*, you cannot possibly hope to get away. The guards outside—the pass necessary for railroad and frontier—"

"You, Mademoiselle le Docteur," said Wyatt, shifting to French, "you will give those passes and safe conducts to us."

"If" Her keen old eyes widened. "You are mad."

Wyatt drew Elspeth von Eppen to him with his left hand.

"I give you a choice and exactly five seconds in which to make it. This is your daughter. Give Hussein and me passes and safe conduct and certificate of graduation. We will take Elspeth to the border as hostage. When we are across she will return. Refuse to do this,"—he paused, cocked the automatic and put the muzzle to the girl's temple,—"*refuse, and I will shoot her. And,*"—his voice was cold and deadly,—"*we will testify to the exact circum-*

stances of how you murdered Hitler's favorite singer. You will be disgraced in your *Fuehrer's* eyes forever."

It was a long speech, but somehow he made it emphatic. At the word "*disgrace*," she even winced. Then she said, gesturing, "How will you have me explain these two dead here?" He did not know whether she was surrendering or not.

"Simple," said Wyatt. "You will tell Herr Himmler of the Gestapo that by some stupid blunder of his men, an American secret agent got here in place of one of the two Turkish gangsters who had been selected by Herr von Papen. You can say that the other was a Turkish secret agent sent here to get the truth of Nazi treachery. You will be telling only the truth."

Her eyes were deep beds of blazing coals, but she did not speak.

"You will say that your niece discovered this perfidy—as she did. But that when she and Erich tried to seize the pair, Erich was shot. So was the *Feldwebel* whom they summoned. These two gents took your niece as hostage and when you arrived and discovered the situation—well, it was too late."

"You mean I am to permit the facts of this school to go out of the country?"

"*Jawohl!*" said Wyatt, and added regretfully: "I only wish I could take the file lists of names."

"I won't do it," said Fräulein Doktor.

Wyatt lifted the gun. "Very well." Nick sprang at him. "No, Wyatt Effendi, you dare not."

"Nick," said Wyatt coldly, "I am in a war where thousands die each day. To save one day of that slaughter, I'd shoot six like her."

He knew he could not kill her, even as he spoke. But the bluff must work. It did.

"I consent," said Fräulein Doktor, "not for her—though I love her—but because the continued good favor of *der Fuehrer* is vital to this school and what I can do here. No matter what you betray, the work will go on and will succeed."

Wyatt went limp. . . . But Fräulein Doktor sat at the desk, scribbled on paper. Wyatt knew the various passes, and he made sure these were in order.

When there were papers for the three, he bowed to Fräulein Doktor.

"Thank you," he said. "We will return Fräulein Elspeth from Magdeburg. *Auf wiedersehen.*"

"*Auf wiedersehen* means to see again," said Fräulein Doktor. "I shall never see you again alive, and to see you dead is too much joy to hope for."

Wyatt had Nick take Elspeth out. At the door the girl turned and blazed: "Mother, you are no mother. You are not even a woman. You are a she-devil, and I hate you."

She went out. Fräulein Doktor stood as if she had not heard. Wyatt somehow felt admiration for the woman. This was a female spy of the old school, the kind of spy that made Germany use them when the other powers of the world rejected women as too dangerously liable to be betrayed by their emotions.

"Then farewell," said Wyatt.

THERE was no trouble on the journey. Fräulein Doktor's name was magic, her passes open sesame.

And so they arrived at the frontier. It had been a quiet, even gloomy journey; Wyatt regretting the list of saboteurs, Nick that his tongue and his infatuation had betrayed them; Elspeth, whatever it was she missed.

Now, at last, the train was across the frontier. Through the snow could be seen cheerful yellow light, so pleasant, peaceful after the blinding blackout of Munich.

Wyatt said to Elspeth, "You can go back now. And I advise you to obey your mother, because she has great power."

"I will not go back," cried the girl, her face sullen. She turned to Nick. "You asked me to come with you. I consent. We go on to Istanbul."

"In Turkey," said Nick, "*Elspeth shall feel the stick and be the better for it.*"



Nick lifted his sleek head.

"But you loved this Erich."

"I didn't love him," she said. "I love no one. I am fond of you. I made Erich love me because I hated my mother. I wanted to hurt her."

"Send her back, Nick," said Wyatt in Arabic. "She's plain poison."

"A very sweet poison," said Nick slowly. "I love this woman, Wyatt Effendi. But in my way. In Turkey, though now we may have only one wife, she is ours. A chattel in the law. And we may beat our wives to obedience. Elspeth shall feel the stick and be the better for it. So she shall find joy in Allah's eyes."

Wyatt smiled grimly.

"Elspeth," he said, "I think this marriage will be the best thing in the world for you."

THE next day, on seeing the pair off on the Istanbul plane, Wyatt thought himself free to make an excursion up the frowning flank of Mont Blanc. But that was not to be. As he finished his report of the strange adventure in Munich, Tellegan said: "Excellently handled. Good enough to be your swan-song for the duration."

Wyatt glanced up from his Scotch and soda, looked first at Sunburn and then at Tellegan.

"What do you mean, Marse Jim?"

"At the specific request of the Army commander-in-chief of the European theater of war, you are to be commissioned a captain in G-2 and give him the benefit of your knowledge of Europe."

As Wyatt remained speechless, Tellegan went on: "The moment for invasion of the continent draws near. You know its people, its languages even better than I. That knowledge will save lives, such lives as were lost in the Dieppe raid because such information was not available."

"And the Diplomatic Secret Service?" cried Wyatt.

"Is lacking one splendid man for the duration," said Tellegan. "You wanted to wear the uniform. You wanted to fight a stricken field of battle. Well, your chance has come. And—and God bless and keep you."

Sunburn said quietly, "And from now on I'm your buck private dog-robbler, and in it with you, up to our necks."

Wyatt stared at the fire. He had longed for this news, but now he felt no joy. He glanced at Tellegan's long emaciated body, his gaunt thin face. Tellegan, so ill and tired, yet who went on because the job must be done. Wyatt's eyes smarted. The old man was uncomplainingly surrendering him for the greater good.

"I'll soldier as good as I can, Marse Jim," said Wyatt. "Let's drink to victory—may it come soon."



A DARK drama of the Paris underworld, developed with brilliant subtlety to a smashing climax: a most fascinatingly unusual story.

The SQUIRE & DAMES

by

Perceval Gibbon

Author of "The Second Class Passengers" the "Miss Gregory" stories, etc.

THE house at Passy stood back from the road behind a gray stone wall, pierced by a gate of iron bars which conceded to the passer-by no more than a glimpse of a green and sunlit disorder of garden. To either side of it, isolated in their gardens, stood other houses similarly screened from view. A solicitous privacy, the secrecy of those who would have no secrets,—which is half the trick of respectability,—lay along the quiet road like a shadow.

Mr. Neuman—"Pony" Neuman to his intimates—was not yet past flavoring an atmosphere. He had just jerked the bell-handle which hung beside the gate of iron bars and inclined his head to listen for the agitated jangle of the bell at the other end of the wire; and there had come to his mind a recollection of those machines one sees in saloons at a certain kind of tourist-resort—a glass box containing improbable-looking dolls, rigid in frozen attitudes of interrupted action. One inserts a coin into a slot; there is a click and a whir; and the dolls start suddenly into a spasmodic caricature of action. Mr. Neuman, in his time, had spent many small coins on these miracles—there was a simple side to his mind; and he stood smiling as he waited.

He was a man of somewhere near forty years of age, short, bulky in the shoulders, with a pink, brisk face that would have been pleasant and commonplace enough but for the chill and wariness of the eyes. Standing in the sunlight under the wall, leaning upon his cane, his gray gloves carried loosely in his hands, his gray Homburg hat pushed a little back from his sleek forehead, the small, thoughtful smile still inhabiting his

face, he made the effect of a man intimately at home among the complexities of civilization, sophisticated to the tips of his manicured nails. Even his attitude in that empty, eyeless road had the quality of a posture that had been rehearsed; he flicked his boot with his cane with the gesture of an actor-manager.

Footsteps padded softly upon the brick path within the gate; Mr. Neuman, moving nothing but his eyes, glanced up. Between the overgrown lilacs that bordered the path there lumbered into view a stout and elderly maidservant, carrying a large, old-fashioned key.

She came to the gate, made a motion as though to insert the key in the lock and then paused, staring at Mr. Neuman through the bars. Her large face, weathered like a winter apple, lowered at him heavily, between stupidity and suspicion. There was a pause of silence and mutual inspection.

"You rang?" she inquired at last.

Mr. Neuman nodded. "Some little time ago," he replied pleasantly. "Madame Dupontel lives here, I believe? I wish to see her."

"Uh!" It was a grunt; the woman continued to stare at him defensively. But it was a trick of Mr. Neuman's trade to be difficult to withstand, and his manner of a very delicate insistence had its effect. "I do not know whether Madame is disengaged; however—"

She bent to the lock and opened the gate, squealing upon its hinges. Mr. Neuman stepped through.

"You need not give yourself the trouble of locking it again," he said airily. "I shall not detain Madame for long."

She grunted again, but submissively, and left the gate unlocked. Mr. Neuman followed her along the path.

A rustic arch, over which a decrepit climbing rose clawed and sprawled, opened from the path toward the house, where it rose above the dank and riotous green of its unkempt garden. Mr. Neuman, pacing in the rear of his stout, deliberate guide, looked up at it with a shrewd curiosity. It was, he noted with satisfaction, a large, extravagant-looking sort of house, one of those excrescences of suburban Paris, all arches and cupolas and cornices, which are the ensign and expression of bourgeois wealth and taste. The roof of the veranda projected like a heavy brow—as if the whole house scowled.

THE front door, in which were panels of virulently colored glass, opened from the veranda; near by, some bulging and much-used wicker chairs stood around a weather-beaten wicker table. Here, with her hand upon the door, the stout servant made a last stand.

"But what name shall I say to Madame?" she demanded plaintively.

Mr. Neuman hung his cane by its crook to his left arm and produced from his breast-pocket his neat gold cigarette-case. From it he extracted a card.

"Give her this," he commanded. He glanced at the chairs. "And I will wait here."

She seemed as if she would demur; he cut her short at her preliminary grunt by moving away and seating himself. He let himself down into the sturdiest of the chairs, crossed one neat leg over the other, inspected his spats and settled his hat upon his brow. She was watching him open-mouthed. Suddenly he looked up at her with that little sophisticated smile of his; she vanished.

"Ha-ha!" said Mr. Neuman under his breath. "Not used to visitors here, eh?"

He composed himself to wait, settling himself in the creaking basket-chair in an attitude of debonair serenity, conscious that each of the windows along the veranda commanded a view of him as he sat. Mr. Neuman had a just pride in his ability to stand inspection; it was one of his professional assets; many a man had scrutinized him at leisure and afterwards lost money to him.

The accident that had directed his steps toward the house at Passy had happened providentially. Mr. Neuman had had a bad season at Monte Carlo: the wealthy youth whom he was "nursing" there was all but ripe for the slaughter; it wanted but a day or two to the moment when he could be plucked like a fowl and never know who had got the feathers—and then there had appeared upon the scene a worldly and hard-bitten friend who had taken the callow one under his

own capable wing and brought all Mr. Neuman's patient labors to naught.

It was with an alertness sharpened by necessity that Mr. Neuman, from his obscure hotel in Paris,—he never lingered upon the field of a defeat,—surveyed his world, cocking his practiced ears for the first whispered hint of a resource. And after the afternoon following his arrival, as he sat in his window smoking a thoughtful cigarette, while the talkative chambermaid sorted his linen for the laundry, the hint had arrived. Mr. Neuman had a charming way with hotel servants—they would talk freely to him where a detective would have found them dumb: he listened idly while the chambermaid volunteered reminiscences of her career in that and other hotels and as a *bonne à tout faire* in various private houses. She mentioned several employers; at the name of one of them Mr. Neuman interrupted with questions.

"Monsieur knows Madame Dupontel, then?" she inquired when Mr. Neuman had noted down the address of which she had spoken.

"Oh, yes," smiled Mr. Neuman. "I knew her before she was married."

"And is it true, as she says, that she was formerly an actress?"

"Quite true," replied Mr. Neuman. "And a very good actress too, once."

"*Tiens!*" said the girl. "A fat old thing like that!"

Mr. Neuman smiled at her benevolently, as she knelt on the floor beside the pile of his shirts, and she was encouraged to continue her autobiography. But the smile was really for the memory she had evoked of Madame Dupontel as Mr. Neuman had known her,—*"Dutch Kate"* she was then,—who had made her profit for years by being simply a "fat old thing," too plump and fussy ever to be suspected of shrewdness.

It was by virtue of just that quality of "fat-old-thingness" that Kate had brought off the crowning and final *coup* of her career. An elderly widower, holiday-making at Boulogne, had fallen into bad hands, and Kate, taking compassion on his sheer foolishness and helplessness, had come to the rescue and steered him clear of the toils. Within a month she had married him—him and his wholesale grocery business and his investments—and had vanished from that furtive world where today is a peril and tomorrow a menace, where the memory of youth is a pain and the prospect of age a terror.

In the "sporting" bars of Paris, where men of very quiet manners meet in the afternoons and exchange queer

news of the world's capitals, there were glasses raised to the memory of the departed.

"Well, old Kate's gone. She's out of it now; here's luck to her!"

None had thought of preying on her; there is no world without its ethic, and loyalty to one's kind is the most elementary of the virtues. But now Mr. Neuman had learned that Kate was a widow; he knew she was well-off; and he couldn't at present afford to waste a chance.

The glass-paneled front door creaked and opened inwards about an inch. Mr. Neuman did not move; he continued to gaze, with his air of pleasant meditation, upon the untidy garden. This lasted for about a minute; then the door was pulled wide open from within, and a stout woman in pink came forth toward him. Mr. Neuman jumped to his feet and removed his hat.

"Madame Dupontel?" he inquired with smiling politeness.

The stout woman stopped short and stared at him; Mr. Neuman, bowing and not ceasing to smile, returned her scrutiny. Six years of security and ease had done their work upon Dutch Kate; she had become a creature in the likeness of an over-filled sack, a figure abundant and unwieldy. Her vast bosom strained the cloth of her dress; over it her face was flabby and obese, absurd and pitiful under its thick powder and crowned with its too elaborate coiffure.

MR. NEUMAN waited to let her speak. He had seen that she was first fearful and then puzzled; she had failed to recognize him, and now her face was merely uncomprehending. Suddenly it cleared; he marked its change to a glad relief. She stepped forward, holding forth both her pudgy, beringed hands, with a little inarticulate cry of unmistakable joy.

"Why—why—it's Pony!" she cried. "Old Pony Neuman, of all the people in the world! An' me thinkin'—but I thought, when I seen you through the crack of the door, that there was a kind of familiar look about you."

She gripped his hand in both of hers, jiggling on her feet and prattling excitedly. Under his mask of pleased acquiescence Mr. Neuman was asking himself: "What's all this—some game of hers?"

"I wondered if you'd recognize me," he said aloud, "after all this time. Lemme see; must be going on for seven years, Kate, now."

"Reco'nize you! Why, Pony, I'd know you anywhere. You aint changed a bit. An' the relief it is to me to find it's you an' not—who I was afraid it was—well, there!"

Mr. Neuman nodded, smiling. She was sincere enough, evidently; this was no game.

**A Twice-told Tale from
the July, 1916, issue of
The Blue Book Magazine**

"But we don't want to stand out here," said Madame Dupontel. "Come on in the house, Pony. I may be a widder but I can give you a real drink all the same."

"Charmed," replied Mr. Neuman. "Charmed!"

THE *salle à manger*, in which presently he found himself seated, facing his hostess across a dining table, with a bottle and siphon at his elbow and a glass before him, was at the back of the house; its window overlooked the untidy spaces of the garden.

"There's a million things I want to ask," declared Madame luxuriously, settling her fat arms on the table. "You're the first of the old lot that I seen since me marriage. Like a breath of fresh air you are, Pony."

Mr. Neuman's smile acknowledged the compliment. He could talk and look about him at the same time; and his eye, wandering to the window, dwelt appreciatively upon the evidences it revealed of solid solvency.

"And Lou Morris?" Madame Dupontel was asking. "What became of him?"

She was avid for news of that lawless cosmopolitan underworld of which she had once been a citizen. Six years of freedom from its constraints and perils had not quelled in her the zest for its adventures and strange contacts. She asked, by name and nickname, after delicate-handed bandits in Petrograd, Berlin, Ostend and London—after the great Conroy, who operated vastly like a financier; after Madame Olivant, who dealt in family jewels; after Punch Lapinsky, who had escaped from Siberia. To Mr. Neuman, who had come at her cautiously, calculating with care the angle of his approach, it seemed that she was throwing herself open to attack.

"Oh, him!" he answered. "He's dead—drank and doped himself to death. But say, Kate; this is a nice little place you've got here. Pretty comfortable, aint you?"

He spoke casually, not changing his tone from its level of trivial good nature. But at the last words he looked across the table, and his frozen and remorseless eyes—his business eyes—fixed her. It was time to get to work.

The stout woman sighed. "Oh, comfortable enough, 's far as that goes," she answered.

He noted the tone of discontent; he put it down to a foolish and romantic yearning after old times.

"It goes a good long way," he said. "I don't see what you've got to complain of. *You* haven't got to keep your eyes peeled for chances; *you* don't find yourself, after two months' work, countin' your shirts to see how many you can do without. Try changin' with me for a bit if you're not satisfied: I shan't kick."

She glanced up. "Had a bad season, Pony?"

Mr. Neuman nodded. "Up against it," he replied shortly. He emptied his glass and set it down, leaned his arms on the table and waited. It was always his method to let the enemy attack first; his strength lay in counter-attack. In any crisis of his enterprises, Mr. Neuman was always to be seen, silent and watchful, waiting for his opponent to show his form.

The stout woman sighed heavily and shook her head.

"I wasn't kickin'," she said. "That's not it, Pony. I got troubles that you don't know about. Why, today, when Julie come in and said there was a monsieur waitin' to see me, you could 'a' knocked me down with a feather. I'm bein' blackmailed, Pony."

"Wha-at?" demanded Mr. Neuman, in strong surprise. "You're being—what?"

Her slack mouth drooped dolorously. "Blackmailed," she repeated. "That's right, Pony; there's a feller got after me—an' I'm payin'! You see, Pony, my late 'usband, he was a good feller and he didn't know—not rightly he didn't—about what my work used to be. I'd told him I was a actress, an' he believed it. An' now there's his sister an' her 'usband—very respectable, in the printin' trade; an' their son an' daughter; an' his old aunt, ninety-one years of age. An' I'd sooner pay anything, Pony—I'd sooner be bled white than have 'em all know."

Her soft, voluminous voice, the uncommonly trouble of her big, thickly powdered face, the mere fluid-looking mass of her as she leaned upon the edge of the table, with the roly-poly arms in their tight sleeves outstretched and the shapeless jeweled hands joined restlessly, the pungency of the scent with which she was sprinkled—the effect of these seized Mr. Neuman by the scruff of his senses and held him goggling and gaping. He sat in his place and stared.

"Rotten, aint it?" said Madame Dupontel drearily. "I don't wonder you're took aback, Pony."

Mr. Neuman picked up his glass, found it empty and turned upon the bottle at his elbow.

"Who's the fellow?" he demanded. "I don't think you know him, Pony," answered Madame. "He aint in your class. Bat Samuels, his name is. He was a hotel tout in Boulogne once—one o' them fellers that meet the steamers. That's how he came to know me."

Mr. Neuman poured himself a drink, measuring it from the bottle to the glass with the care of a chemist.

"Bat Samuels," he repeated. "Samuels, eh? Lemme think a bit! Why, you don't mean that rat that used to nark for the Sûreté—him that was a witness against that Apache crowd?

Little man with a scraggy neck and black teeth—not him?"

Madame nodded. "That's him, Pony; that's Bat."

"An' how much has he had?"

Madame went into figures. "But it aint the amounts; it's him comin' here himself, sometimes two or three times in a week, an' drunk as often as not. I never hear that bell ring now but I go off into a tremble, expectin' to hear that croak of his outside, and see him grinnin' and hiccoughin' in the door an' showin' them beastly teeth he's got. And lately he aint satisfied with what he used to get; he's raisin' his figures."

"He'll eat you alive," said Mr. Neuman grimly.

He drank from his glass, emptying it at a draught; it was a gesture that emphasized the speech. From across the table the fat woman was looking at him piteously.

"Today, when I found it was you instead o' him, I could ha' jumped for joy." She paused. "Pony, now you're here, couldn't you—couldn't you help me a bit?"

There was, perhaps, in all Paris and its environs (as the maps say), no man less subject than Mr. Neuman to the sentimentalities which dull the edge of business. Even as Madame had commenced her appeal, he was considering, calmly enough, the advisability of getting a share of the plunder while any yet remained, and still calmly, had abandoned the project. The little rat-man who narked for the Sûreté,—was, in other words, a spy of the police upon his fellow-felons,—with his scraggy neck, his black teeth and his general vileness, had taken the wind out of his sails. Even an international crook may be careful of his company; and Mr. Neuman couldn't work on the heels of Bat Samuels. It was a decision deliberate and reasoned, owing nothing to sentiment; yet, when he looked up at the large, foolish face opposite to him, waiting in a twitching tension of hope for his answer, something that had lain dead within him till now awoke.

MADAME DUPONTEL saw the sudden flush of red that surged into his face and his quick movement in his seat. He swore crisply—Mr. Neuman seldom swore—and brought his fist down on the table with a crash that made the bottle jump.

"You bet I'll help you!" he said strongly, relaxing himself in the luxury of a frank emotion.

"Ah!" The fat woman sighed happily. "You always was a good feller, Pony."

"That's all right, Kate." Mr. Neuman was serious, with the gravity of determination; he looked a very adequate and resolute person when he chose. "You're one of us, you are; we

can't have these outsiders goin' to war on us like this. I reckon I can fix this Bat Samuels for you. Where'll I find him?"

She shook her head. "He never gave me no address, Pony. You see, he comes himself. That's nearly the worst part of it; it does scare me so."

"Ah, well!" Mr. Neuman reached for his hat and cane and rose. "I s'pose I can find him. It's a marvel to me that that Apache crowd that he split on hasn't fixed him long ago. Still, you needn't worry any more, Kate; I'll handle him now."

She had risen likewise. She looked at him across the intervening table with admiration and utter trust, in which there was mixed something of a fearful secrecy. "What you goin' to do to him, Pony?" she asked, lowering her voice. Then in a pregnant whisper: "You aint thinkin' o' nothing rough?"

Mr. Neuman shrugged his shoulders and frowned. "Lord knows," he answered. "Roughing isn't in my line; I'll know better when I've seen the man. But it don't matter to you, old girl; this is my business now."

"An' it couldn't be in better hands," agreed Madame Dupontel warmly. "I'm safe with you. An' the blessin's of a helpless widdler on you, Pony—a pore old widdler's grateful blessin's!"

Mr. Neuman laughed and made his farewells. He was aware of a mixture of emotions, and some of them were new to him. Partly he felt like a fool and partly like a loser who has thrown away a game he could have won; but there was likewise a sense of having acted a spirited and generous part to an appreciative and applauding audience, and of being in fact rather a noble and vigorous person. It put a new jauntiness into his gait as he walked away from the gate of iron bars; he swung his gold-mounted cane dashingly. It was only when he turned and looked back to wave to Madame, where her vastness projected from the gateway like a great pink bubble, that he remembered how the hidden house had reminded him of the glass boxes in which the mechanical dolls waited to be made alive. At the memory, some of the confident brightness and complacency faded from his face.

"I'll never waste a cent on one of those fakes again!" declared Mr. Neuman seriously. "An' as for Bat Samuels, I bet I'll make *him* dance, anyhow."

To the ordinary dweller in the daylight world it might appear an affair of difficulty to trace in Paris a man who desired to remain hidden, who belonged, besides, to a species which only survives by virtue of its skill in keeping out of sight. To Mr. Neuman, however, with his peculiar knowledge and his special sources of information, the task was not formidable. He knew what he had to look for—the trail

which such a one as Bat Samuels, with money to spend, would leave across the lower floor of the underworld. By early evening, he was already following that trail.

HIS inquiries had taken him up the hill toward Montmartre and into a small and unpretentious café near the Place Pigalle. Already the lights were ablaze in the twilight along the Boulevard Clichy; the quarter was settling down to its hectic evening industry of manufacturing "night life" to the crude taste of the tourist. But in the small café there endured an almost studious quiet. The half-dozen or so of men who sat in couples at the little tables were unobtrusive in appearance and low-voiced; the proprietor, behind his zinc-topped counter, was big and jolly of feature without any corresponding jolliness of expression; the single servant of the place was a sluttish middle-aged woman with a strong mustache and the jowl of a hanging-judge. Hither, in the natty splendor of his well-cut clothes, with his debonair and comely presence, entered Mr. Neuman.

Wary eyes turned upon him from the groups at the tables; Mr. Neuman met them with a chill and masterful calm.

"Good evening, my big one," he greeted the somber host. "*Ca va tous-jours?*"

The large man all but smiled. "*Tiens!*" he exclaimed. "It is Monsieur Neuman!"

He extended across the counter a hand like a sponge, big and yellow and soft, and Mr. Neuman shook it with condescending warmth. Behind him, in a rustle of whispers, he heard his name pass from mouth to mouth. He was here on ground where his eminence was recognized.

He leaned an elbow upon the bar, crossed one ankle over the other and let his cane dangle from his wrist.

"A vermouth, I think, for us both," he commanded. "Your vermouth used to be worth drinking when I was here before. How long ago is that?"

The proprietor, busy with the bottle, shook his large sleek head. "A year?" he ventured. "Two years?"

"Time passes," said Mr. Neuman oracularly. He clinked his glass with the other's and drank critically: "Ye-es; it is still drinkable. And what," he inquired carelessly, "—and what is the news now?"

He took a cigarette from his gold case, leaning still upon the bar, listening with an air of idle good-nature to the proprietor's chronicle of gossip. In that shabby place of shadows he was refulgent; among those slouching customers he stood like a king. They were plebeians of their kind, the journeymen of their craft; he was an aristocrat and a master. He felt the

homage and envy of their regard as he leaned, smoking and smiling, waiting for the large man to come to the name he was anxious to hear.

It came at last. Mr. Neuman took his cigarette from his lips and regarded it attentively.

"Spending money, is he?" he said reflectively.

"Every night," replied the proprietor. "It is curious. He is not working, and yet he has money like that! Perhaps we shall hear of something soon—a closed house in the suburbs with only dead people in it, or there is a body in the Bois that has not been found yet."

Mr. Neuman was not shocked; he merely nodded indifferently. He was in a world now where burglary and murder were industries like other industries. It was not his world; he was present rather in the guise of a distinguished foreigner; but it was not his business to be critical of the habits and manners of the natives.

"Comes here, does he?" he inquired.

The proprietor shook his head. "No," he said, and his slow eyes traveled across the room, carrying Mr. Neuman's with them. At a table against the wall, a man sat alone. Mr. Neuman's raised brows asked a question.

"Yes," answered the other, sinking his voice. "The Skinner, we call him—Jacques the Skinner. He was one of that gang that Samuels gave evidence against. You remember? Two went to the guillotine and five to New Caledonia. So, you see—Samuels would not come here."

Mr. Neuman saw quite clearly. He turned and looked at the Skinner with interest.

"I've heard of him," he said. "Is he sober? Because, now I'm here, I'd like a little talk with him, if it could be managed."

"But he is always quite sober," protested the proprietor. "A very pleasant poor fellow—Jacques! He will be proud. I will arrange that for you in a moment."

"Do," requested Mr. Neuman.

The table at which Mr. Neuman seated himself was that nearest the window; he placed himself at it with his back to the quiet street. The Skinner, after a whispered conference with the proprietor, came drifting across to it.

"Absinthe," he said, in reply to Mr. Neuman's ritual opening remark, and let himself tumble limply into his chair.

UNDER the light, he was visible as an emaciated boy, of perhaps twenty years of age, upon whose meagerness of frame the shabby black clothes hung slackly. His face, drooping above his shallow chest, was dead white; the line of the thin lips across

it was like a narrow gash; it was still as a countenance of stone. Till the absinthe was brought, he neither moved nor spoke; Mr. Neuman, watching him, felt, despite his connoisseurship in the varieties of man, an impulse of disgust that was half fear—the creature was so utterly evil that save when he was doing evil he was scarcely alive at all. He existed in a torpor of absinthe and foul imagination till he woke to grisly crime.

The scowling waitress brought the liquor; the clatter of the glassware on the iron table seemed to rouse the Skinner. His stagnant eyes took in its presence slowly; he heaved himself upright as if with extreme effort, put out long, bony hands to the bottles and looked across them at Mr. Neuman for the first time. In the light of that glance, all seeming of feebleness fell from him; it was as though he had unsheathed for a moment the poisonous and lethal soul of which his flimsy body was the scabbard.

He mixed his complicated drink expertly, tasted it and set it down. Mr. Neuman, who had been watching him with fascination, leaned forward over the little table and began to talk. . . .

The small café slumbered and whispered about them; men entered and left; the waitress went heavy-footed about her work; behind his bar, the proprietor champed and snorted over his evening meal. None disturbed the murmured conference at the table by the window. If any glanced at Mr. Neuman, it was merely the tribute of interest which obscurity pays to success; but none took a seat near enough to overhear, and none made any comment. Mr. Neuman explained, making play with a white forefinger; from time to time the Skinner nodded a reply; for the rest, he listened. Three times the scowling waitress, answering the wave of a hand, renewed the supply of absinthe.

"Then," said Mr. Neuman finally, "that's fixed, eh? If I find him to-night, I'll steer him round to Massy's bar before midnight. I'll know by then where his room is, an' I'll leave word with that one-eyed waiter there. I suppose I can depend on you to keep sober?"

The Skinner only looked up for answer. Mr. Neuman was ready for him this time; he met that narrow cutthroat gaze with his own icy and dominating stare. Their eyes fought for a space of moments; it was the Skinner's which gave way first.

"Well, don't forget!" said Mr. Neuman, driving home the warning with a frowning nod. The Skinner's thin lips parted in soundless acquiescence. "Because," added Mr. Neuman, "I shouldn't forget it if you did."

He rose; the big proprietor came shuffling forth to walk to the door with him and bid him a deferential fare-

well. But he asked no questions; his was the house in which embarrassing questions were never asked.

There is, among the more innocent and childish attractions of the Boulevard Clichy, an establishment which opens from the pavement like an electric-lighted tunnel, inhabited by rows of slot-machines which furnish canned music, moving pictures and the like wonders to whomsoever will furnish the due coin. There are likewise machines with which one gambles feebly, staking ten centimes upon the possibility that it will fall from the slot through a system of obstacles into a certain tray and yield a return of perhaps a franc.

Mr. Neuman, drifting along the rank of slots, forgot his resolution never again to be a patron of mechanical dolls; there were one or two machines which he found interesting; and he came quite casually up to the little group that was watching a speculator at play with the mechanical gambler. He heard the tinkle of the coin inserted, the choke of the works as it was swallowed, the rattle of the money's descent to the all-but-inevitable forfeit. He pressed nearer, and across the shoulders of the onlookers he had a glimpse of the man who played.

He said nothing; a man in Mr. Neuman's business must rid himself of the habit of exclamation; but for a moment he smiled.

HE worked his way through the group about the player, feeling in his pockets for small change, till he stood beside the machine. He watched another small coin go tumbling to its fate; then he reached for the slot with his own contribution.

"What do you do? Just put it in?" he asked of the man who had been playing.

"Shove it in an' press this knob," answered the other.

Mr. Neuman did as he was directed, saw his coin engulfed, and laughed.

"You won anything?" he inquired, producing another.

"No," replied the stranger with an oath. "An' I'll bet you don't neither. These things aint meant to win with."

He was a man of anything between twenty-five and thirty-five years, smallish of stature, whose every aspect and attitude were marked by a quality of mere meanness. Something at once ungainly and furtive was salient in him; his long neck stood out of his collar with a suggestion of indecency; his narrow face was timid and impudent; and when he grinned at the loss of Mr. Neuman's second take, he showed a mouth like an old graveyard, foul with ruined and blackened teeth—a very carrion-worm among men. Mr. Neuman, sacrificing coins alternately with him smiling, chatting, putting out his

trained talents of captivation, could well understand how that figure of squalid menace upon her doorstep had terrified Madame Dupontel.

"Well," he said, when two francs' worth of change had enriched the proprietor of the machine, "this thing's certainly got an appetite, but I don't see myself standing here and feeding it all night. I'm going to get a drink or two."

He nodded to his companion as though to leave him; it had not taken him long to get the measure of Bat Samuels.

"Le's 'ave a drink together," suggested Samuels promptly.

Mr. Neuman nodded indifferently. "Come on, then," he said, and Samuels went.

THE Boulevard Clichy blazed and surged; above it, the summit of Montmartre rose in cliffs of building; below, Paris glowed and sparkled in vivacious beauty. Over all, a clear night sky, powdered with stars, arched like a dome, and the clamor of the moment was strident in the ears of eternity. Along the Boulevard, threading through the throng of the pavements, went Mr. Neuman, that suave and accomplished squire of dames, and Bat Samuels, who spent with both hands the money he knew he could have for the asking and the moments upon which he set no value.

From one place for the solace of unquiet souls to another they wandered in a companionship of increasing intimacy; it was nearing midnight as, with linked arms, they bore down upon the flaming enticement of Massy's bar.

"Whadier doin' tomorrer?" inquired Samuels then. "What say to comin' 'ome to my room with me an' sleepin' there an' then goin' the rounds together again?"

"Well," Mr. Neuman was doubtful. "I don't know about that. Where is your room?"

And Bat Samuels, pointing to the hill above them, gave his address.

"I got a good room—none o' yer lousy attics for me," he added. "There's a sofa in it; you'd be all right, an' tomorrer we'll 'ave a real old bust."

Mr. Neuman gave a sidelong glance at the profile of the man who held his arm and offered him the shelter of his dwelling and spoke of tomorrow as though he carried it in his pocket. He hesitated a moment.

"I'll come home with you, if you like," he said then. "But as to tomorrer—we'll see!"

Bat Samuels jeered. "You think that a little spree like this'll make any difference? Why, I don't call this drinkin' at all—crawlin' along from one place to another all the evenin'. You don't want to worry about me; I'll be lively enough in the mornin'."

He shouldered his way into Massy's bar, with Mr. Neuman following at his heels. A one-eyed man served them with liquor and walked across to the counter with Mr. Neuman to fill his handsome gold cigarette case for him.

It was close upon two o'clock when they turned at last from the Boulevard into the narrow uphill street which led towards Samuels' lodging. Mr. Neuman still walked with his accustomed gait, cane and gloves in hand, a civilized and responsible figure; Samuels lurched somewhat and was voluble and noisy; his hoarse talk covered Mr. Neuman's silences as they left the lights behind them and went up between the high, silent houses under the quiet glory of the heavens. He was elaborating his program for tomorrow; the word was frequent on his lips; there was a moment when it seemed to Mr. Neuman, whose nerves were tautening like a banjo string, that he emphasized it in derision, that he knew what was prepared for him and was mocking his enemy.

"I'll show you more o' Paris than y'ever saw in yer life," the hoarse voice boasted. "I'll tell you—this ol' town's 'ot—red—ot—but you want to know yer way about. Now, tomorrer, I'll take you to a place I know—you'll see—"

He stopped; they had reached the door of a gaunt tenement which lifted rank upon rank of dark windows, with here and there a lighted one, above their heads. Samuels fumbled for the bell which should rouse the concierge in her bed to pull the cord which would open the door.

"This your place?" asked Mr. Neuman.

"This is it," answered Samuels. "Goo' place, too—you'll see." He added, with a meaningless vanity: "'Spectable people live 'ere!'"

The door clicked; Samuels pushed it back, revealing the dimness of a stone-flagged entry out of which a dark stairway rose. The curtained glass door of the concierge's hutch showed the faint and dull glow of a light within.

"Come on!" bade Samuels, entering. Mr. Neuman still hesitated upon the threshold. "What's the matter?"

"Sure it's all right?"

"'Course it's all right," cried Samuels. His face in the gloom showed white and horrible, like some gruesome mask hanging in midair. "Think I'd bring you 'ere if it wasn't?"

Mr. Neuman shrugged his shoulders; it had the look of a movement of surrender; he entered at the door which his urgent host held open for him. Samuels let it go when he was within and it swung to and closed itself with a hollow slam.

From the concierge's room a querulous voice called indistinctly through the glass door. Samuels shouted his name.

"Now!" he said, and led the way up the stone stairs, upon which his footfalls echoed noisily.

"Now!" repeated Mr. Neuman under his breath, and followed him.

THE unlighted stairway circled in its well from landing to landing; upon each, dumb doors showed their blank and solemn countenances to the pair who went by, the unsteady man who led the way, the sober one who followed. None looked out upon them; they mounted in the silence of the sleeping house, unseen.

"'Ere's where I live," said Samuels, at a door upon the third story. He made play with a key, stabbing at the lock with it. The door yielded at the thrust of his groping hands. "Ull! I must 'a' left it unlocked. Queer!"

Mr. Neuman, upon the threshold put one hand to the doorpost and held by it. He heard Samuels lurching about in the darkness of the room, bumping against the furniture and swearing. "Never can find that blasted switch. Where the 'ell is the thing? Ah!"

His hand, brushing along the wall, had found what it sought; the switch clicked; the room was suddenly full of light.

"An' now—" began Samuels.

He turned towards where Mr. Neuman waited in the door and stopped short, the words jolted from his lips at sight of the lean, black-clad figure, spare and dangerous as a thin knife, that stood, motionless, voiceless, at his very elbow. Mr. Neuman, gripping the doorpost, had a view of his face, imbecile with terror, incapable even of an outcry. And he saw, too, the face of the Skinner, white as bone, and the vivid red of the thin lips that widened as he watched into a slow smile. There was an instant during which none moved; then Mr. Neuman, with a hand that wavered, drew the door towards him and shut himself out from the room.

Afterwards, what he remembered most powerfully was that interval of waiting in the darkness upon the landing, gripping the banisters and listening—straining his ears in a horrible and fascinated eagerness for sounds that should filter through the closed door. The house, which had been so silent, seemed to pulsate about him with the scores of lives it harbored, to reverberate to the beating of hearts; but from that room in which the Skinner and Bat Samuels were closeted there came no sound—not a cry, not the thud of a blow or a fall.

He saw the line of light below the door disappear; the Skinner in there, his work done, had turned it out. The door opened noiselessly, and Mr. Neuman was aware that he had come out, a shadow of a presence from which he shrank. The shadow spoke.

"*C'est fini*," it breathed. "It is finished." Then after a pause: "You would like to see?"

Mr. Neuman shook his head violently, forgetful of the darkness. "No," he whispered. "Come out of this, quick! I'll—I'll be sick or something in a moment."

He could not see,—he was glad of that,—but he knew that the Skinner was smiling. He braced himself for the ordeal of descending the staircase with this companion at his side. . . .

In the *salle à manger* of the house at Passy, Madame Dupontel leaned upon the dining table and beamed admiringly at Mr. Neuman, seated opposite to her. Bottles and glasses colored the interview with the hues of hospitality; a strong sun lighted the prospect of the garden.

"So," said Mr. Neuman, concluding his remarks, "you can take my word for it, Kate—you'll not be troubled any more. You and he won't meet again."

He had still his outward spruceness, all that polish and outward finish which a man can buy from tailors and haberdashers. If the pinkness of his face was less pink, if he seemed tired and older, he had already explained that he was not sleeping well of late.

"Well, Pony," said Madame Dupontel, "you don't need to hear me say I'm grateful; you know that without me tellin' you. But I would like to know how you fixed him."

Mr. Neuman's face twitched in a half-involuntary grimace.

"Leave it at that, Kate," he said. "You were in a mess, and I got you out of it. That's enough for you to be sure of."

Madame Dupontel shrugged. "Well, if you say so, Pony," she yielded. "Any'ow, I'm grateful to you for what you done, 'owever you done it. You been a gentleman to me, Pony."

Mr. Neuman waved her compliments from him.

"Yes, you 'ave—a gentleman to me. An' now, since you've 'ad a bad winter—you said the other day you was up against it—if a thousand francs, or two thousand, would see you through it—"

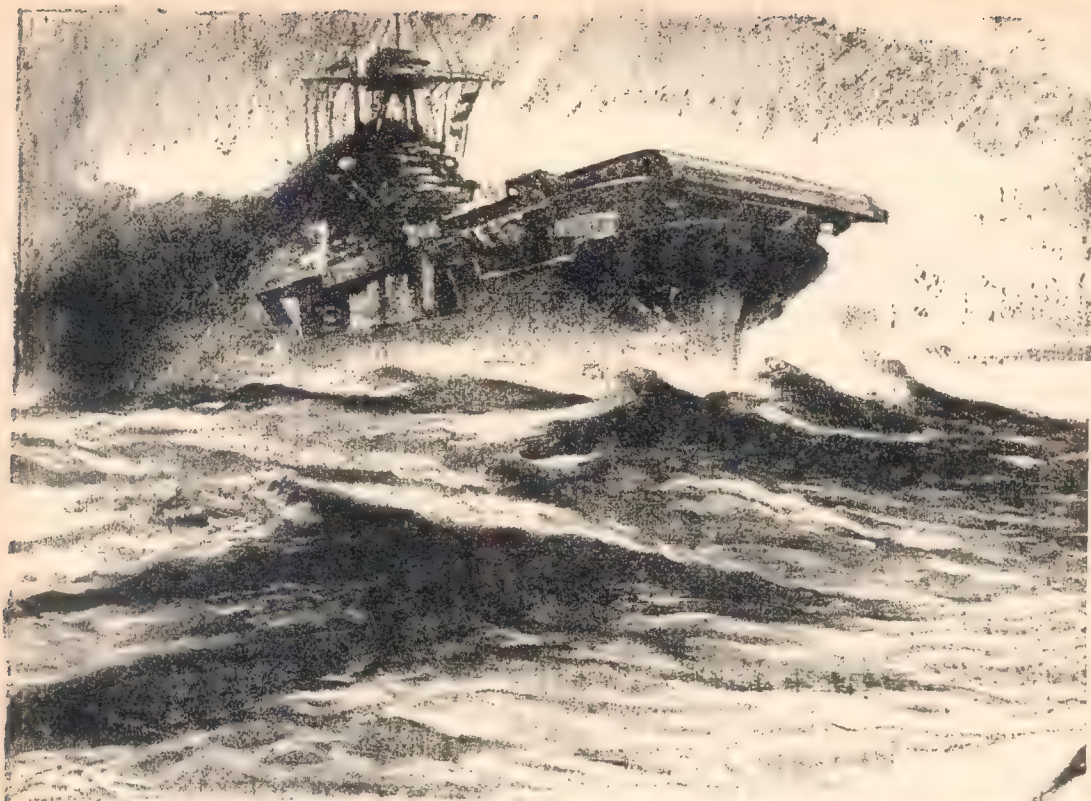
SHE had her purse upon the table; she opened it while she spoke, and her absurd shapeless fingers fluttered the crisp edges of a bundle of paper money.

"It'd be a pleasure to me," she added.

Mr. Neuman gave a small shudder; the eyes with which he looked at her had a touch of wildness and his smile was an effort.

"No," he said hastily. "No, thanks, Kate. Between a gentleman and a lady, you know—no, I couldn't take any money for what I've done for you."

The whisky-bottle, catching a ray of the sun, winked at him. He reached for it eagerly.



THIS IS IT, PILOT!

The Story Thus Far:

"**C**LEAR PROPELLERS!" the bull-horn wailed. "START ENGINES!" The carrier *Bennington* was shepherding a convoy to Murmansk, and a squadron was going aloft on patrol.

"Ahead off starboard quarter," Prebley's bombardier-observer Slater exclaimed a few minutes later. "Looks like a torpedoing job going on!"

They were too late to save the stricken freighter; but they had an extraordinary piece of luck, for the attacking submarine showed its conning tower, and Prebley gave Slater a chance to bomb and destroy the enemy with their own torpedo.

Yet as they winged back to the *Bennington*, Ensign Prebley was too troubled in mind to share Slater's exultation. For he had only that morning confirmed his surmise that Commander Ranford, the Air Officer of the *Bennington*, was his own estranged father.

This estrangement had come about in curious fashion: Ranford had married during World War I, wherein he had already made a brilliant record as a Navy pilot. His wife, however, sick with anxiety before her child's birth, had used family influence to have her husband transferred to a shore job. He felt that she had thus ruined his career, and as a consequence they had separated. He had resigned from the Navy; but his record had won him a commission again when hostilities once more threatened. She had brought up her boy alone; and he had always used her maiden name Prebley rather than his father's.

Another thing worried Prebley: That morning, just as another Devastator plane was landing on the carrier, the 'midships elevator was inexplicably lowered, with the result that the plane was damaged and the pilot injured. Was there a traitor aboard? *(The story continues in detail.)*

ABOARD the *Bennington* there was a strange hush of expectancy as the Devastators came into view. The white plume from the whistle snapped out, and the hoarse bellow batted the deck teams about the ears.

From the signal gaff a white flag snapped out and presented landing authority. The Flight-deck Officer hurried to his position, fingering his paddles nervously.

Prebley waited until Winton had signaled the dispersal for landing, then swung out and followed Thoreau around in the circuit to await his turn to go in. He looked down and saw that the signal bridge was stiff with ship's officials.

"We're getting a welcome," Prebley beamed, and then the impact of realization thumped him across the chest. It was his plane that had actually sunk that submarine! The torp that had finished her had come from *his* cradle. Slater had released it, true; but it was



An aircraft carrier on convoy duty in the Battle of the Atlantic—finds an enemy aboard the ship too.

by Arch Whitehouse

Eddie Prebley who had slammed the Devastator—Devastator marked 212-S-3—so accurately at the sliver of conning tower that had enabled them to score. That was teamwork, that was! Slater had cooperated beautifully! Even Craig, who saw only the prospects of possible promotion and a citation, had cooperated. Craig had been on his toes. He'd seen the marking—a figure 7—on the conning tower just as she had broached. That was splendid. Good going, Craig! They'd have a real report to turn in. Actual data and details. That was a break, that was, the way the Nazi pig-boat came to the surface to make certain of his victory.

He wondered what Commander Ranford would say to all that.

Prebley watched Thoreau go in and drag his hook against the arrestercables. He set his mixture at automatic rich, his prop into low pitch, and dropped the flaps and undercarriage. Automatically he repeated his

landing litany, and suddenly remembered the hook. Had to have the hook down. Green light on the board, and his seat up for deck visibility.

"Well, here we go! Let's see what they have to say now."

The Devastator snubbed on the flaps and tried to stall, but Prebley kept her at it until the undulating deck seemed ready to bob up and ram the undercarriage legs up through the wings. He held her and eased the throttle back as the Signal Officer's paddles remained outstretched in a horizontal position. The crash-screen ahead seemed to dance and play tricks. The cables across the deck appeared to alter their spacing, and there was that anxious breath-stopping second when every face, turned toward the knife wings of the torpedo plane, seemed to take on the grotesque carved effects of a set of theatrical masks.

Prebley could almost feel the critical shutter slashes of the camera filming

**Illustrated by
GRATTAN CONDON**

the evidence of his landing from the camera-port of the island superstructure. He sat tense, awaiting the thud of the wheels on the surging deck.

"Here we go!" he muttered.

There was a low blubbery bump, following a helpless settling instant, and then the frantic grab of the hook and the resultant jerk just when she seemed delirious to bounce on toward the crash screen. The plane-handlers scrambled out and snatched at the wing-tips. There was some struggling business behind while the cable was cleared from the hook, and Prebley caught himself looking at the bridge.

Commander Ranford stood with his hands clutching the rail, his gray eyes staring down emotionless, cold—steely with the annealed temper of one who is trying to view a situation with relentless impartiality.

"Who got it?" a C.P.O. was yelling.

"Get that crate the hell out of there!" came from the loud-speaker.

THE plane-handlers were grinning like shapeless Disney characters as they mauled the Devastator forward to the elevator. "Who got it?" they continued to demand.

"We did!" Craig yelled from his gunpit. "Smacko in the conning tower!"

They clambered out stiff-legged and trembling, while the torpedo plane was positioned on the lift. Slater, parched and ungainly in his flying gear, was floundering to hold on to his navigation instruments and chart. Winton came up and slapped him across the shoulders, and he dropped his parallel rulers.

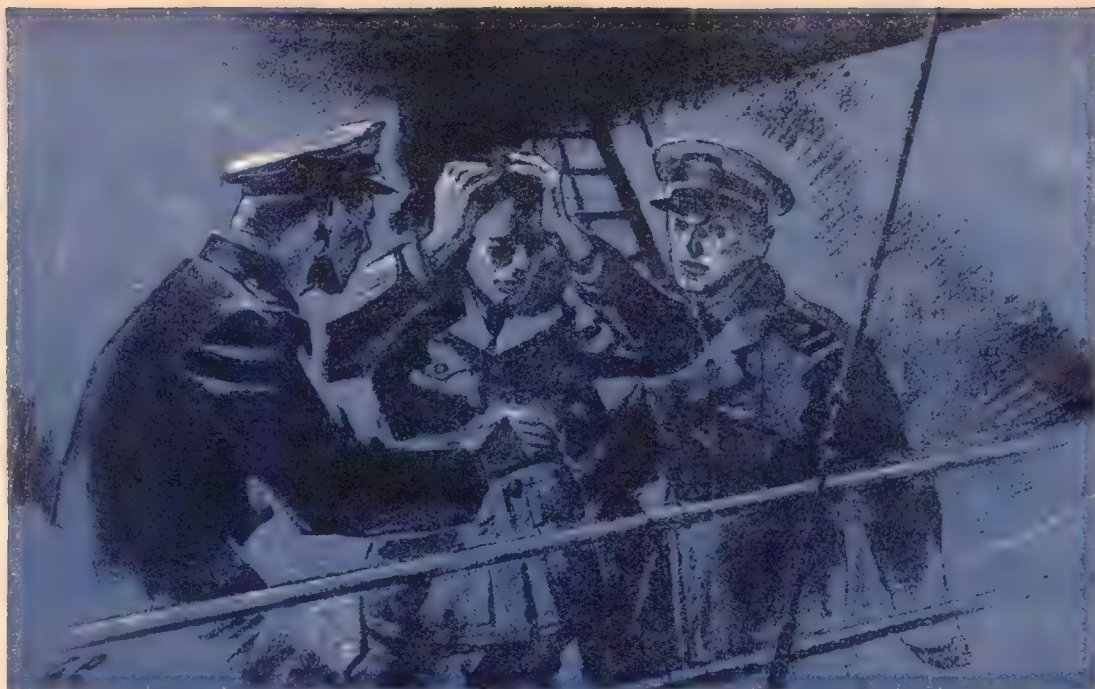
"Good work, you lucky devils!" the squadron leader bellowed.

Prebley stood alone, loosening his parachute harness. "She came up just in time," he said to no one in particular. "We were lucky, at that."

"All crews of Squadron 212 report to the ready-room," the loud-speaker growled.

"That's us." Winton said with the air of a man trying to remember something. "Get below, you guys!"

Prebley moved off around the end of the crash-screen while a plane of No. 2 Section floundered over the ramp and snagged at the cables. She swung wildly, and the plane-crews scattered while the bull-horn bellowed again. The Devastator, with a torpedo partially tucked away into the fuselage, floundered and then swung back hard and stood cockeyed, with a flat tire bulging out below the steely rim. A plane-handler ran up, stared at it and kicked at it savagely.



"If you say, 'Someone's gonner get hurt,' I'll boot you in the rump," Prebley warned Biff Thoreau as they went through the bulkhead in the island and started down the metal companionway.

"Guys can get hurt," persisted Biff hurrying down the first six steps. "I hope you'll be able to sleep tonight."

"Jees! You had a crack at him!"

"Anything to get rid of that damned tube of T.N.T. They say they got a dollar watch in the detonator. You can't tell—some guy might have set it by Eastern Standard, and then where would you be?"

"You could have hit him—low down," argued Eddie.

"I couldn't hit Staten Island," Biff protested.

Tod Moresby came thundering in on his corkscrew legs and floundered through the milling mob to get at Prebley. His face was smudged with cockpit muck; his wild yellow hair tamped down with perspiration seemed to have been given a cheap finger-wave.

"You old son-of-a-bob-sled, you!" he bellowed. "You taking this war over for your own personal show?"

"Shut up!" Prebley remonstrated.

"You got it, didn't you?" Tod persisted, and then turned around as if to defend his booming declaration. "You got it cold. . . . Whammo!"

"Take it easy!"

"Don't tell me someone's squawking? You could have missed it if you

Commander Bloxham rammed his great hands to his head.

had lost your head. You saw the opportunity, and you took it," Tod growled, shoving in alongside Eddie, who had dropped low in a club chair.

"I was lucky—that is, we were lucky. Winton and Biff had nothing to shoot at." She came up just as I went in. There it is in a nutshell."

"Quiet, everybody!" the bass voice of one of the deck officers boomed.

They all wriggled and stood up to attention, and Commander Ranford's voice came through the disorder, cigarette-smoke and happy confusion.

"All right, gentlemen. Stand easy."

"Jees! Don't tell me—" Tod began again under his breath.

COMMANDER RANFORD attempted to put a man-to-man air of friendliness on the proceedings by standing at the table and fingering his pipe.

"A very good show, gentlemen," the Commander began. "A very good show—as far as I know. What happened, Winton?"

Lieutenant-commander Winton got up, snubbed a cigarette in a piston-head ash-tray and related in simple statements how they had come on the torpedoed merchantman. He explained how he had taken two sections down to investigate, and left two upstairs to maintain patrol altitude.

"I was uncertain just what to do at first, since we were carrying torpe-

does and not bombs. However, I could still see a trace of a torpedo-track, so I risked one at a steep angle. Thoreau, my No. 2 man, followed and repeated my attempt. It was Ensign Prebley's plane that stuck in the hit. The U-boat was surfacing a short distance from where I had planted mine. Prebley did a splendid job with what he had to work on—a direct hit, sir."

"Good! What have you to say, Prebley?" Ranford said quietly.

"Well, sir, it was just as Lieutenant-commander Winton has said. We were lucky in our position. She surfaced enough to give me something to bear on, and Slater did the rest. Craig, my gunner, saw the hit and reported that the C/T carried the figure 7. I think that is very important, sir."

There was nothing more to say, and Prebley simply stood there facing the man who was searching him with his eyes, probing, piercing and raking him with a discerning fire that made every face in the ready-room turn and stare at the young ensign.

"Is that all?" Ranford asked coldly.

"That's all, sir."

"There wasn't any question about it, sir," Winton broke in again. "We saw her stern come up, and I noticed the bronze screws. There was a decided oil slick."

Still no further encouragement from Ranford.

"It was splendid teamwork and co-ordination, sir," Winton insisted. "I think they had started to surface and

then received another order for a crash dive, because only a small portion of the C/T appeared and—well, I feel they were starting down again. Prebley and Slater worked it clean as brightwork, sir.”

“Thank you,” Ranford said with a tone of dismissal. “We shall make a formal claim for the sub. However, I want it thoroughly understood that I consider this job a ship’s honor. What credit there is in it will be equally distributed among the whole ship’s company. We want no individual heroics aboard the *Bennington*. There can’t be, in an organization as intricate as this. We all have our job to do, and the success attained by one torpedo-plane crew is only made possible by the utmost in teamwork by every man aboard.”

There was a silence in the ready-room that could have been chipped off in cold-chisel chunks. Once more, Prebley felt the sting of the glances that came from the faces of pilots, bombardiers and gunners. They were already blaming him for this stand the Commander was taking. He might just as well be saying: “I want no heroes aboard my command. There’ll be no citations or medals for nailing down U-boats. Your job is to fly—and die, if necessary.”

The Commander went on: “You will all make your reports and turn them into the Air Intelligence Officer. The forms will be distributed at once. A complete report will be made to Convoy Force headquarters, of course. After that, the incident is out of my hands.”

Wads of report-forms were being passed out and fingered by the men who were still trying to interpret Commander Ranford’s meaning.

There was a scuffle of feet and a period of attention while the Commander and his pilot fish were leaving.

Winton caught the acid tang of the atmosphere and tried to break it up with: “All right, guys. There it is. Fill ‘em out—and hope.”

“What the hell’s that guy got against you, anyway?” demanded Tod.

“He probably still thinks I dropped that elevator,” parried Prebley, checking his take-off time to begin his patrol report.

“But cripes! He could put your crew in for Navy Crosses, or something. What about Slater and that gob gunner of yours? They’re not getting a square deal.”

Slater was staring at Prebley from across the table. Craig, with the puzzled mug of a betrayed beagle, stood sucking the end of a well-chewed pencil. “We aint gonner get no citations,” he finally muttered.

“I’m surprised,” broke in Thoreau from the other end, “that we’re not going to be charged for the two tin fish we wasted.”

THE ports were battened down, and the air in the long creaking passageways was rank and heavy with the stench of new paint, hot oil and the dank odor of condensation. There was the whine of bulkhead locks, the wheeze of elevator buffers and the clank of metal links crawling over a set of chain-hoist pulleys.

Along the companionways blue battle-lights glowed and provided eerie backgrounds for muffer-swathed figures moving to take up their watches.

The *Bennington* was plunging on to make her rendezvous with the convoy which had filtered out from ports all along the coast from Savannah to Halifax—tankers, freighters, merchantmen and converted whalers loaded to their Plimsoll allowances with the machinery and materials of war. Tanks and tapioca, bullets and bacon, airplanes and apples, guns and grain. Slack old tubs with economy sterns, dazzle-daubed merchantmen with raking stems, hog-bellied whalers that still dragged stench of blubber, and tramps that seemed to flaunt their drab unholy silhouettes against this charade of mercantile review.

A hundred skippers with sealed orders in their strong-boxes, heading for God knows where! A course set for days on the cutaway stern of a lugger ahead with her name daubed out. Days and nights untold with the binacle light always displaying a N.N.E. course. When the hell would they swing south and get away from these biting blasts that were tempered on the bleak crags of Mt. Hecla?

Was it to be Murmansk again? Not Murmansk again! God-a-mighty, it was Murmansk last trip! Rounding the Nordkap into the aerial inferno of Nazi might. Blasted to hell by torpedoes that crossed and crisscrossed and left grids of boiling froth. The wail of armor-piercing bombs that went all the way through to the lower orlop decks before they were ignited by their delayed-action fuses.

Not Murmansk again!

“Hold your station, Mister, if you want to stay in this convoy!”

ALREADY the destroyers were snapping at the flanks of laggards, herding them into some semblance of formation before the final rendezvous was reached. Gun-crews in corduroy and oilskins swabbing at the grease-packed gimbals of the three-inchers. A man on the bridge who had once commanded a heavy cruiser at Jutland. A signalman huddled against a weather screen trying to remember a girl’s address in New Brighton. A tramp steamer hugging the stern of a single-stacker with goal-post masts so close they could sniff the tang of stacked pine in her holds.

After dinner, Prebley and Moresby poked about in their stateroom—setting out laundry, writing letters, checking duty details and making a very bad job of trying to keep their conversation off the topic that seemed to stifle them.

“I don’t know about you,” Tod finally broke in, “but I’m going topside and get a breath of air before turning in. We got a fairly early show in the morning. Coming?”

Prebley dragged on his cigarette, inhaled deeply and let the plumes of smoke trickle slowly from his nostrils. He looked at the butt and then remembered the prevailing order to darken ship between sundown and daybreak. He snubbed it out in a dime-store ash-tray and rubbed his hands together.

“Let’s go!”

They slipped out to the forward deck, stepped high over the anchor chain and made their way to the rail. A seaman, indistinct and immobile, stood watch near the long row of ash-cans that nestled on the steel tracks leading out to the discharge recess. Above, a silver-specked canopy arched over and danced lightly on the horizon. A cutlass slice of moon tilted to “hold water” was rising as if to clear the path of this gently plunging behemoth.

“Yeh, we’ll fly tomorrow,” Tod said, studying the sweep of cobalt above.

“You can’t tell. We may even fly tonight, if something turns up.”

“Sure. We may fly tonight and get us another pig-boat, eh?”

“I hope someone else gets the next one,” mooned Eddie.

Tod wagged his head and tried to distinguish the outline of an escorting destroyer. He rolled easily and changed his position so that his elbows were on the rail and he was resting on the small of his back.

“I think I got this all figured out, Eddie,” he said quietly.

Prebley didn’t change his position. He still leaned over the rail watching the big phosphorescent plume being wedged out by the bow.

“I’ll bet you have,” he muttered.

“I’ll bet a jacket there’s a woman in it somewhere,” Tod said, watching the seaman. “There always is.”

“There usually is,” agreed Eddie.

“I thought so. What’s she like?”

“A swell guy—for my money.”

“Nice, eh? Where’d you meet her?”

“I don’t know. I can’t remember.”

“Whew! She must be a stunner,”

Tod said after some consideration, “Where does the Commander come in?”

“That’s the gilligan hitch. You figure it out.”

“Easy,” Tod said turning around again. “You meet a girl. She’s that way about a Navy boy with wings. Army-Navy night at the Astor, and

cuddle-cuddle across the river on the Weehawken ferry. Neither of you can remember who won the game."

"You're really good," muttered Prebley. "You should try rewriting *The Bluejacket's Manual*. You'd make it readable."

"You just gotta put two and two together," explained Tod.

"What's the rest?"

"This canary just happens—just happens, mind you, to be the daughter of the ratee one—the Commander. The old man won't stand for any chick of his being hitched to a guy who can't stay on the deck. He figures the Navy is tough enough in war time, without a guy being in the torpedo troupe at the same time. Besides there's a lot of guys in shore berths who'll always be around."

"I really have to hand it to you," Prebley said with an indefinable sniff.

"So the Commander comes aboard to take over, and the first guy he spots is you. He naturally figures you worked it somehow to get aboard his covered wagon, so that you'll be right handy when he feels in a benevolent mood."

"But instead he gets mad, and thinks I want to blow his ship up and won't give me any medals for bopping a sub. You should be in Hollywood, Tod."

"How else can a guy figure it?"

"That's as good a way as any," Prebley admitted, "but it won't do. Still, you got an idea there—that Weehawken ferry business."

"I lost more hats that way—" moaned Tod.

"You figure out who smacked old Staples, and I'll tell you who makes the business aboard this carrier."

"Not me! I'm staying out of that mess. Like Thoreau always says, 'a guy can get—'"

Prebley heard the swish and later it reminded him of the hiss of a bass line. There was a dull *thock* that stopped Tod right in the middle of his reflections on Biff Thoreau—a leaden smack like hitting the sole of a heavy rubber boot with a flat file.

Moresby went down, clutching wildly at the rail. His chin hit before Eddie could get an arm under him.

"What the—" he started to say.

Tod had turned and was leaning over the rail watching the reflection of the moon across the water when the blow came. He crumpled, went to his knees and rolled over.

"*Tod! Tod!*" Prebley called. "What hit you?"

But Moresby was limp and making strange noises. The seaman on duty clambered over the train of depth-charges and looked with incredulous eyes at the figure of the man on the deck. Then he glanced up at Prebley with a strange glint in his eye.

"You really socked him, eh?" the seaman said sulkily.

"I didn't do it. He was just standing here talking to me. I heard something—" But Eddie sensed that he was wasting time trying to explain to a man who had already made up his mind on the subject.

"Here! Lend a hand. Let's get him inside. My—our stateroom is just along this companionway."

"Maybe you'd better leave him where he is," the seaman said.

"Okay. Sound off and get someone. Don't stand there!"

"I'm on watch, sir. I can't leave."

"Holy Moses! This is an emergency!"

"Sure! But I'll stay here, sir. You go get the division officer, or maybe the surgeon."

Bewildered, and realizing that here was another questionable situation to be booked against him, Prebley knelt beside Tod and tried to get him into the moonlight. Moresby was snuffling and emitting low groans; but except for a light trickle of blood from somewhere behind his left ear, Prebley could discover no particular damage. He looked around for his hat, but it was nowhere on the deck.

"What hit him?" the duty seaman asked again.

"I don't know. We were just talking here. You must have heard us. Did you see anyone—besides us—here on the deck?"

"No sir!"

CHAPTER SEVEN

A FEW minutes later Tod was stretched out on his bed in their stateroom. Jeff Winton, their squadron leader, came in from a few doors further along the corridor. He took one look and sent for the surgeon, while Eddie mopped away with a wet towel and brought Tod around enough to try to struggle to a sitting position and demand to know what happened to him.

"Who did it?" Winton asked while they waited for the ship's surgeon.

"I don't know. We were just standing out there at the rail talking—about nothing in particular—when suddenly he just keeled over. I thought I heard something, but I can't say what it was."

"You get yourself in the damndest situations, don't you?" Winton muttered, squatting alongside Moresby.

"Look!" Eddie began again. "We were both at the rail. Tod was leaning over—just talking. I was leaning against it—that is, with my back to it—on the same side he was hit. Just the two of us, with a seaman forward beyond the depth-charge train. No one else there at all!"

"But this guy gets a smack across the squash," broke in Winton, and then got up to let a medical officer.

who had just come in, get to Moresby's bedside. "Looks like we got another mystery, Doc."

"Okay. Take it easy and let's have a look," the young physician said, taking Tod's head between his long thin fingers. He smoothed the hair away, touched and felt the swollen area carefully. He hunched down on the edge of the bed, turned and looked up at Winton and added: "Bad—but not too bad!"

He went to work cleaning the wound and applying a suitable pad and bandage. He ordered his accompanying pharmacist's mate to get Moresby undressed. "I'll give him a few hours and then get him up to the hospital and take an X-ray. It may not be too bad."

The Executive Officer, Bloxham, came in with the Master-at-Arms. Jimmy-legs was flustered, and plainly upset. Such goings-on aboard his ship were beyond his comprehension.

"What happened?" Commander Bloxham demanded.

Winton took over and related the details as Prebley had outlined them to him. The Master-at-Arms was eying Eddie with a myopic orb, and quite ready to charge him with everything that had happened since the *Bennington* had been commissioned.

"Let's go out there and have a look round," the Exec. suggested.

Prebley led the way out of the stateroom and along the corridor. He twisted the big wheel that opened the bolts of the watertight bulkhead, and stood aside to let the Commander through. The Master-at-Arms took over the door, and Winton went through next. Prebley followed, and the Master-at-Arms waited and made sure the bulkhead door was properly closed.

"We were standing just over there. Mind the anchor-chain, sir," Prebley explained. "There was a seaman on watch forward, there."

The Executive officer stood a few feet from the rail and tried to peer about.

"There's not much we can see now in this light. Where were you standing, Prebley?"

"Right here, sir. I had my back to the rail, like this. Moresby was talking about Army-Navy football night in New York. He was about there, just where you are. He was resting on his elbows and looking out to sea."

Yes, like that."

Commander Bloxham was unable to resist the urge to reconstruct the situation. After all, he was supposed to be making a formal investigation. He interlaced his fingers and rested his elbows on the rail and leaned forward just as he figured Moresby had done.

"It's hard to explain it now, sir," Prebley went on, "but I thought I heard a slight swish, maybe like a light



whip—anyway, an unusual sound—and then—

Thock!

Commander Bloxham made a half-lunched movement and rammed his great hands up to his head. His cap went off and floated away on the stream of wind that swept in from under the big lip of the flight deck above. He gave way at the knees, and for a second was supported on the rail by the stiffness of his arms. He let out an anguished wail just as Winton and Prebley caught him.

"Phwat's the matter, sor?" the Master-at-Arms broke out in his more natural brogue that always asserted itself when he was excited.

"Here's another!" Winton gasped. "Here, give a hand, Prebley. Let's get him to your quarters. The M.O. might still be there. Get topside, Ryan. Something was dropped from the flight-deck."

The Master-at-Arms hustled off, bulgy and heavy-legged. Winton and Prebley supported the Exec. and got him into Prebley's stateroom. They sat him on the bed while the young surgeon turned and stared up from a medical report he was filling out.

"Now what?" he said uncertainly. "Another?"

"Just like this guy," Winton growled. "Prebley was showing the Exec. just how Moresby got it—and *smacko!*—Commander Bloxham stops something, too. I think someone topside dropped something."

The medical officer passed the buck to Prebley. "Ensign Prebley seems to have been in on most of it, sir."

The surgeon pulled Bloxham's hands away and looked at the livid swelling. "But it's on the *side* of his head," he argued. Then he looked about and made a pointed suggestion: "You'd better call the Skipper."

"I'll use the phone in my berth," said Winton. "I'll go."

"Wait a minute," Prebley said suddenly. "This time it's on the *other* side. Moresby was hit on the left side. This is lower down below the ear. That's the side you were standing on, Winton!"

"All right! All right! Take it easy, sir. Lie down and let's have a look," the surgeon suggested.

They eased him down, and Eddie pulled his pillow out to bunch it higher. As he did so, beneath it was disclosed a heavy leaden weight.

"What's that?" Winton snapper.

"You got me!"

PREBLEY picked up the weight, which was of a flattened-pear shape. It was solid lead, with a loop of copper wire molded into the stem end. There was an inch or two of strong plumb-bob cord knotted into the copper loop.

"What the devil is that doing under your pillow, Prebley?" demanded Winton.

"I don't know. What is it?"

"You ought to know. It's a sheet weight used for lowering lines. How did you get it?"

"I never saw it before! I don't even know how it got here."

The medical officer took it from Prebley and tested its weight in his hand. It was very heavy—fully seven or eight pounds. He held it against the swelling that was becoming more definite below the Commander's ear, and looked around at Winton significantly.

"It's a plant!" Winton said with decision. "You didn't sock the Exec. with that, at any rate. Let's go call the Skipper!"

They hurried along the corridor to Winton's room. The squadron commander had a telephone in his room that was connected with the ship's switchboard.

"I'm telling you," Prebley continued, once they were in Winton's stateroom, "I didn't even know that thing was there. Why should I sock Tod Moresby?"

"You didn't. Someone's making a mug of you," Winton replied stiffly. "Hello! Give me the Skipper's stateroom, please."

Winton sat there with the instrument to his ear and looked at Prebley; "This has gone far enough," he charged. "There's something murky aboard this lugger, and I'm not having my outfit put on the spot for it."

"Thanks, Winton. I had nothing to do with any of this."

The squadron commander frowned and tried to peer into the transmitter: "What the devil! Hello. . . . Is that you, Swayle? . . . Oh, excuse me, sir. This Captain Tennant? . . . For a minute you sounded like the A.O.'s writer, Swayle. . . . Eh? . . . Swayle went down to Ensign Prebley's stateroom with a message? . . . Oh—I see. This is Winton of 212. Can you come down to our quarters, sir? Commander Bloxham and Ensign Moresby have been mysteriously attacked. . . . You'll come at once? . . . Thank you, sir."

"He's coming?" inquired Prebley. "What was that about Swayle bringing a message to my quarters?"

"I don't know. He'd been sent down after some sort of a conference. You'll see him, I guess."

THEY went back to the stateroom, where the M.O. was still daubing with pads and liquids.

"The A.O.'s writer, Swayle, been here while we were out?" inquired Prebley.

"Not while I've been here."

Prebley looked around, and then noticed an envelope on his table. It was partially covered with bandage-cartons and other medical supplies that had been tossed there by the pharmacist's mate.

"I guess this is it."

"Must have brought it in before."

"Right," said Prebley reflectively, "before we came in with Tod."

He stuck his finger through the flap of the envelope and took out the sheet of paper inside. There was a short curt note asking for a rough outline of the conning tower of the submarine which had been sunk that afternoon by the torpedo planes of Squadron 212. There was a plain sheet of paper attached for the purpose.

"I'll give them what I can remember," Eddie said, trying to recall a few details of the sub's superstructure.

But the business of the lead weight concerned him. As Winton had said, it was obvious that someone had planted it there. If Swayle had been in earlier, he *could* have slipped it under the pillow when he brought in the special report requirement.

"But wait a minute," he said aloud, and they all turned and looked at him. "If that was what Tod was smacked with, what did they use to hit Commander Bloxham?"

He twisted and went over to the bed where the Exec. lay. The young medical officer turned Bloxham's head slightly to adjust the bandage. "See that?" said Prebley, pointing to a faint red welt that ran from the Commander's left ear-lobe to a point under the chin.

The surgeon ran his finger along the welt, but apparently made nothing of it.



"ASBESTOS JOE"

At that minute the Skipper came in, sober and dignified in his best blues jacket. Commander Ranford was with him. Prebley couldn't keep his eyes off the blue ribbon that took precedence over all the other ribbons on his chest. He suddenly realized that there could be nothing more desirable than a bank of military decorations topped off with the bright and shiny wings of the Navy.

There was a strange contrast between Captain Tennant, Chief Officer of the vessel, and Commander Ranford. The four-striper was pudgy and bull-necked, and he seemed uncertain where to put his massive hands. Commander Ranford was suave and at ease, and young Prebley felt the glow of pride in the realization that this man was his father.

Captain Tennant went to Bloxham.

"What happened?" he asked.

The young medical officer, who now looked as though he'd be more at home in some suburban clinic deciding on the future of a set of enlarged adenoids, stood up and passed the buck to Prebley.

"Ensign Prebley seems to have been in on most of it, sir. Two of them have been struck in much the same way with the same sort of blunt instrument."

Commander Ranford turned slowly from his position and for an instant presented a pained glance which eventually rifled into service seriousness again. "Let's have it, Prebley," he said with a choked tremor in his voice.

For the third time Prebley went over the details of what had happened. Lieutenant-commander Winton corroborated every point, and added his belief that someone was trying to frame Prebley.

Commander Bloxham sat up and wagged his head in the affirmative and said: "That's just how it happened—in my case, sir. I was hit on the other side, though—the side Winton stood."

"I thought something had been dropped from the edge of the flight-deck above," Winton broke in again, "but in both cases they were hit on the side of the head."

Prebley decided to go off the deep end and have it over. "I want to show you this, sir," he explained, taking the heavy looped weight from his table. "When we brought Commander Bloxham in and started to make him comfortable here, this was found under my pillow."

"I think both blows were struck with that—or something like that," the medical man explained lamely. "Although it was in here—under the pillow—when they brought the Commander in."

COMMANDER RANFORD hefted the lead weight, fingered the short length of cord and stared off into space. He put it back on the table under the gleam of Prebley's desk-light, and made an authoritative gesture with his hand. "Get the Commander to his stateroom. Have Moresby here removed to the ship's hospital for further examination. He seems to have been really hurt. I'd like to take charge of this business myself," he added to Captain Tennant.

"Might I make a suggestion, sir?" Prebley inquired. "I was thinking about that piece of cord tied—"

Commander Ranford stopped him with: "Keep thinking about it, son, I think you're—"

But then he stopped, and for an instant a faint glow of a smile warmed his features. Prebley almost put his hands out in gratitude, but the party had turned away and was leaving the stateroom.

"Next week, 'East Lynne,'" Tod Moresby muttered from his bed. "I hope that gal stays off that Weehawken ferry."

"Oh, shut up!" Eddie growled.

The pharmacist's mate and Winton were helping Commander Bloxham to his feet and leading him out of the room.

"This is gonna be a nice tub of blood before we get through this cruise," Moresby went on. . . .

The bugle ranted peremptorily over the speakers and echoed along the passageways. It was followed by the boosted wail of the bosun's pipe and the repeated command:

"Flight quarters!"

It was five-thirty in the morning, and the shaggy taste of the night before seemed to have left a coating that could be felt along the companionways and doors of the staterooms. Bundled figures, feet in unlaced shoes, stumbled along the blued corridors, clanking the metal swivels of parachute harness as they clambered over water-tight door-frames. . . . The cold metallic sweat of a ladder, a yawning oblong hatch and another doorway that presented the drab solids and angles of the hangar deck.

An unkind light above wiped in the suety details of sleep-puffed faces and rasped the edges of wings, gun-turrets and steel props into a harsh engraving of mechanical efficiency. The blacks were really black, and the silver of the wings might have been pressed out of sheets of tinfoil and smoothed with a hot iron.

Gnomes with electric torches probed the depths of engine-cowlings and inspection panels. A hopeless variety of hats, shapeless and grotesque, rimmed down unruly thatches of oily hair. Hunched gnomes pushed and shoved to get their ships through the tangle of tails and wing-tips to the elevators that wheezed, clanked and growled with the muscular effort of hydraulics.

Insistent sirens snarled warnings as the lifts went aloft with their winged burdens, and one by one eighteen planes of a fighter squadron were interlaced in position on the flight-deck.

Behind the blacked-out ports of the bridge compartments Commander Ranford was working out details of the patrol in the airplot room. Captain Tennant, drinking coffee from a silver-crested mug, was issuing his orders in throaty tones; and outside, the blades of a signal lamp were clanking off signals to an indistinct destroyer a few cable-lengths away on the port beam. Below, other figures were moving almost noiselessly along the catwalks to the gun and searchlight platforms.

The bellow of starting engines on the flight deck above roused Eddie Prebley from his night of troubled slumber.



"Swayle was looking for Jenkins—said he had a message for him," said Biff Thoreau later.

He lay there for a minute or two, trying to distinguish the orders that barked out from the bull-horn. He could picture it all in filtered detail: the kick and swish of propellers, the snap of yellow flame through the exhaust ports which would eventually blob and splinter until it took on the blue of meticulous mixture.

"Engines off!" he said aloud, trying to keep pace with the activity above; and as if in response, the booming above ceased.

"Pilots, man your planes!" he muttered. "Stand clear of propellers!"

There was a deep-bellied response from the ship's whistle, and he lay there and sensed that the *Bennington* was swinging into the wind.

"There they go, Tod," he called across the stateroom. "They should

make contact with the convoy this morning. We're getting well north by now."

It suddenly dawned on him, however, that he was alone in the stateroom, and the impact of realization of the happenings of the night before pushed him into a sitting position.

He looked around, snapped on his desk-light from where he sat, and spotted the heavy leaden weight where it had been left. He reached over and pulled it to him and fingered the piece of cord again. The end was clean, and had evidently been cut with a sharp knife.

"I have an idea how they did it," he decided. "This piece of cord gives their game away. Someone was on the flight-deck above, or on the safety catwalk. He had measured it beforehand, and swung this in a quarter circle from above."

He sat there mentally picturing the trick, and smiled with the realization that Commander Ranford had seen it in the same way.

"The first time he caught Tod clean—on the left side. The next time, Bloxham was standing with his head higher, so that it swung below his chin and the cord left that welt down the left side of his face, and the weight swung up and clipped him on the right side. That snubbed it, and he didn't get such a stiff smack as did Tod."

ALL that was pretty clear in his mind now. What was more important, however, was to determine who had been up there on the flight-deck. He considered Swayle, who had brought the message from the A.O.'s office. Swayle could have crossed the flight-deck from the island and staged the trick that had biffed Tod. Then he had time to cross the flight-deck again, wind up his cord and cut the weight clear. He could hurry along the flight-deck in the darkness and go below by way of the Flight-deck Officer's station, which had a narrow ladder to the level of the deck accommodating the junior officers' staterooms. From there he could deliver the message and hide the leaden weight under Prebley's pillow.

"That's an idea, anyway," he agreed with himself. "But if Swayle left the weight here, how did he get back and time it to get Commander Bloxham? With another weight?"

Swayle had been doing some mighty funny things in the meantime. He was supposed to be Ranford's office assistant, but he had access to many other important quarters on the bridge.

Prebley gave that up, slipped out of bed, shoved his toes into a pair of slippers, pulled on a dressing-gown and went out to the showers.

Biff Thoreau was toweling himself in the steam and tang of soap.

"Don't say it!" Eddie said, pointing a finger and cocking his thumb.

"I don't have to. Winton told me all about it in bed. Why don't you stop bopping people?" Thoreau grinned.

"When I start, I'll begin with you. What do you make of it, Biff?"

"There's an awful lot of guys acting screwy on this lugger," Biff started to say.

"Name one!"

"Mel. I was on the flight-deck last night. I could have dropped something—twice."

"You said you couldn't hit Staten Island. That lets you out."

"I saw Swayle too. He was looking for Jenkins—he's Du Laigne's gunner. Said he had a message for him."

"Sure. He had one for me too. The Skipper wanted a silhouette of that U-boat's conning tower."

"Wait a minute! Jenkins was upstairs with 3 and 4 sections. He probably never saw it. Why would—"

"Maybe the message was for Du Laigne," said Prebley, slipping out of his robe. He was forking the wisps of information over in his mind now, and trying to get a stack that would be worth serious consideration. Biff wandered off and left him to consider it all further under the needling impact of the shower.

"It was Swayle and Du Laigne on the bridge yesterday," he said to himself as he soaped his long lean body. "Last night Swayle was on the flight-deck, looking for Du Laigne's gunner. I wouldn't be surprised if both of them had something to do with it. Swayle is a crafty devil, and Du Laigne—well, Du Laigne doesn't seem to be particularly bright."

These were early morning impressions and as he slipped out of the stall to towel off, they seemed as hazy as the atmosphere in the shower-room—only questionable coincidences.

CHAPTER EIGHT

PREBLEY wandered back to his stateroom and dressed while the *Bennington* began to act troublesome. He opened the port plate and peered out into the leaden light of the early morning. The sea was piling up a series of serried hills that echoed a low guttural thunder.

The racing prow of the *Bennington* was snarling into the ranks of running crests, whitecapped and boisterous, ahead of a brisk northeaster. Grim battlements of clouds were gathering their bastions, aflame with the ignition of the sun punching lance-like beams of gold through the shapeless case-ments left in the workhouse-gray walls of the horizon.

"What the hell was Airplot figuring on, sending those fighter guys off this

morning?" he grumbled to himself. "They'll scatter themselves all over the deck, trying to get in!"

"Still," he reflected, "as Biff always says, there's a war on, and someone's likely to get hurt. Under ordinary conditions they'd never risk a series of tactical practice landings when the weather promised to kick up like this."

There was a glint of weather in Prebley's eye, and he sensed the trickle of a sailor's intuition as it drew a feather across his shoulder muscles. He hadn't spent many years along the coast of New England for a yachtboy's thrills. He'd tackled them all from Gloucester fishermen down, and he'd sailed a Friendship sloop about Northeast Harbor when burly salts, testing the weather on their cheeks, said you couldn't keep a lugsail aloft.

"The Flight-deck Officer will need a butterfly net to catch them, coming in with this weather," he muttered with a deep conviction that something had slipped up somewhere.

He dressed hurriedly and selected a pair of woolen socks. It would be getting colder now. He steadied himself against the bulkhead and pulled on a pair of light woolen underdrawers. Over his shirt he slipped a black crew-neck jersey, and flipped the tabs of his shirt-collar clear. Breakfast was informal aboard the *Bennington*.

He was early, so he wandered along to the sickbay and inquired about Tod. The pharmacist's mate on duty reported that Ensign Moresby had started out badly, but a bromide had helped, and he was sleeping fairly well and should not be disturbed.

"That's all I want to know," smiled Eddie. "Give him the works and ship him back as soon as you can. I miss him."

"Yes sir."

"You may need all the beds you have," added Eddie. "There'll be some fun topside when the Grumman boys get back."

"What makes you say that?" a voice said gruffly behind him.

Prebley spun on his heel. The creaking of the bulkheads and panels had blotted out the footsteps of the Air Officer, who was evidently on an early morning prow.

"Good morning, sir!" Eddie man aged, as he stiffened and saluted.

"I asked you a question, Mr. Prebley," the Commander insisted.

"I was worried about the weather, sir. We're getting quite a chop and pitch."

"So you think the fighter pilots are not capable of handling a rough situation?"

"I wasn't questioning their ability, sir. I was referring to the deck conditions."

"I see. Well, I don't care for my service flying officers discussing such matters with the ship's sickbay per-

sonnel. I'm quite sure they will rise to any situation the weather or any other emergency may create."

"I'm sorry, sir!" Prebley replied, feeling that Ranford was making plenty out of nothing.

"Damn it, man! Don't be sorry! Have the courage of your convictions!" the A.O. stormed. "I know we're likely to have trouble too, but I don't spread it around—around the sickbay."

There was no answer to this, and Prebley simply stood dumb, trying to figure it all out. The Commander broke it up by turning to the orderly with: "How is Moresby this morning?"

THE pharmacist's mate reported what he had told Prebley. Commander Ranford nodded and thanked him, and then turned and took Prebley's elbow and started him along the passageway.

"I don't want you to take any of this as a personal grudge, you know," he said when they were out of earshot.

"I think I understand, sir. It was thoughtless of me."

"That business last night," Commander Ranford continued, ignoring the declaration. "I was glad to see you had caught it. None of the others seemed to have picked it up."

"After all, I'm on the spot, sir," Prebley said resolutely, wondering why the Air Officer had so suddenly changed his attitude. "I seem to be the one someone is trying to make a Jonah of."

"Well, they're picking on the right one!"

"Sir?"

"By that I mean someone aboard knows all about us. We're not supposed to do this show. So far, they're doing a pretty good job, too, but we're taking that convoy to Murmansk if we have to do it with a biscuit gun mounted on a dory—and we may have to do that."

"But who can know? I've told no one. I didn't even know you were still in the service, sir."

"I believe you now. Make no mistake about that. What we've got to do now is keep up our present relationship until someone shows his hand. After that—"

"Yes sir. Thank you, sir!"

They parted at the ladder. Commander Ranford went aloft to the turmoil of the flight-deck, and made his way to the island and went into the navigation-room. Eddie went down a ladderway to the hangar deck and moved aft to the wardroom.

He was still uncertain of his position, however. He felt now that both the Skipper and Commander Ranford were still suspicious of him, but Ranford had attempted to ease his mind in the hope that he would show his hand. If that was the case, he would still maintain his injured atti-

tude and continue to search for the man or men who were trying to break up the smooth efficiency of the carrier.

In the wardroom the welcome odor of bacon and eggs and steaming coffee relieved some of the strain, and he sat down and watched in silence while the steward heaped his plate and inquired for his further wishes.

The rest were in the usual groups. Biff Thoreau was arguing with Winton about a four-letter word in a crossword puzzle. Others were discussing the orders of the day. Someone had received an important radio message and sat poring over it alone.

As Prebley sat in grim solitude, he realized suddenly that most of the dishes on the tables were set in gim-bals to prevent sloshing the liquids. The tables swayed, and loose cutlery trickled back and forth with the dip and roll of the vessel as it punched its great prow into the thundering charges of the enraged sea.

He steadied himself with his elbows and managed to cram some of the cereal down and skoff his coffee; but before he had finished his plate of eggs and bacon, the rest were leaving in worried groups, commenting quietly on the order that had sent the fighter squadron on patrol with weather conditions such as they were.

Prebley pondered on some of the remarks and began to wonder whether this could have anything to do with all the other mysterious incidents that had occurred so far aboard the *Bennington*.

He watched the slithering crockery and the efforts of the wardroom stewards to maintain some table decorum, and realized the weather outside was really boiling up.

"They gonner try to get them Wildcats back on the deck, sir?" a pasty-faced steward inquired.

"They'll probably try until a couple pile into the island or bounce over the side," Prebley commented dismissively.

"That could have been a mistake—sending them off in this, eh?"

"It could be," agreed Prebley; "but it's a hell of a mistake if it was. They ought to have better met. information than that."

"What'll they do in a case like this?" the steward persisted.

"If they can't get them back on, they may order them to clear off and try to get in somewhere ashore."

"How'll we get them back?"

"We won't. We'll be too far at sea for them to make it by the time the weather clears—perhaps."

"And we won't have no fighters to cover the VT's and the VSB's?"

"We got another squadron. They'll have to carry the load when it gets hot," Prebley said, getting up and wondering why he was making all these explanations to a steward.



"So you think the fighter pilots are not capable of handling a rough situation?"

He folded his napkin carefully before taking it to its slot in the wardroom rack, and worried about the fighters. He knew a meteorological crew aboard checked the weather, and took coded reports from shore stations, correlated it all and made up a weather chart which was initialed by the Meteorological Officer. And when there was any question of sending a patrol off, the full weather chart was presented for the Air Officer's approval. He pondered on it, and still wondered why Commander Ranford had initialed his okay on the flight sheet.

CONFUSED and worried, Ensign Prebley went out, glanced at the orders of the day posted up on the lounge and noted that the air-crews of Squadron 212 were slated for a convoy-information lecture at five bells in the ready-room.

He joined Thoreau, Winton and Teddy Booth outside the Armament Officer's shop on the hangar deck.

"We're going up topside to scare ourselves to death," Biff explained with a pained grimace. "Coming?"

"Might as well. Might as well see what it looks like to try to get a shuttcock down on a shingle from fourteen-thousand. Judas! Who sent them off into this?"

"These War One shellbacks," Teddy grumbled. "You can always bank on something screwy when you get a guy who has campaign ribbons up. They just try to prove to themselves that they were good—once!"

"They didn't give out Navy Crosses in the other war for holding down a place on the binnacle list," argued Eddie. "I'll bet the Air Officer could take anything we fly off this platform."

"What are you carrying the torch for?" demanded Biff. "He's had you before the anchor already, hasn't he?"

"Sure! But he had a reason. I didn't look so good up there on the bridge when that elevator went down."

They staggered along the companionway and made their way to the base of the stairway that led up into the island. The vessel was rolling and pitching violently now. Halfway up, Teddy Booth hung on and stopped.

"Maybe he took his ticket on old Eagle boats once, but I'd like to see him putting a galloping Grumman down on this splinter. These War One guys give me the willies!"

"Five will get you ten he can do it!" snapped Prebley, and wondered why he defended Ranford in this manner.

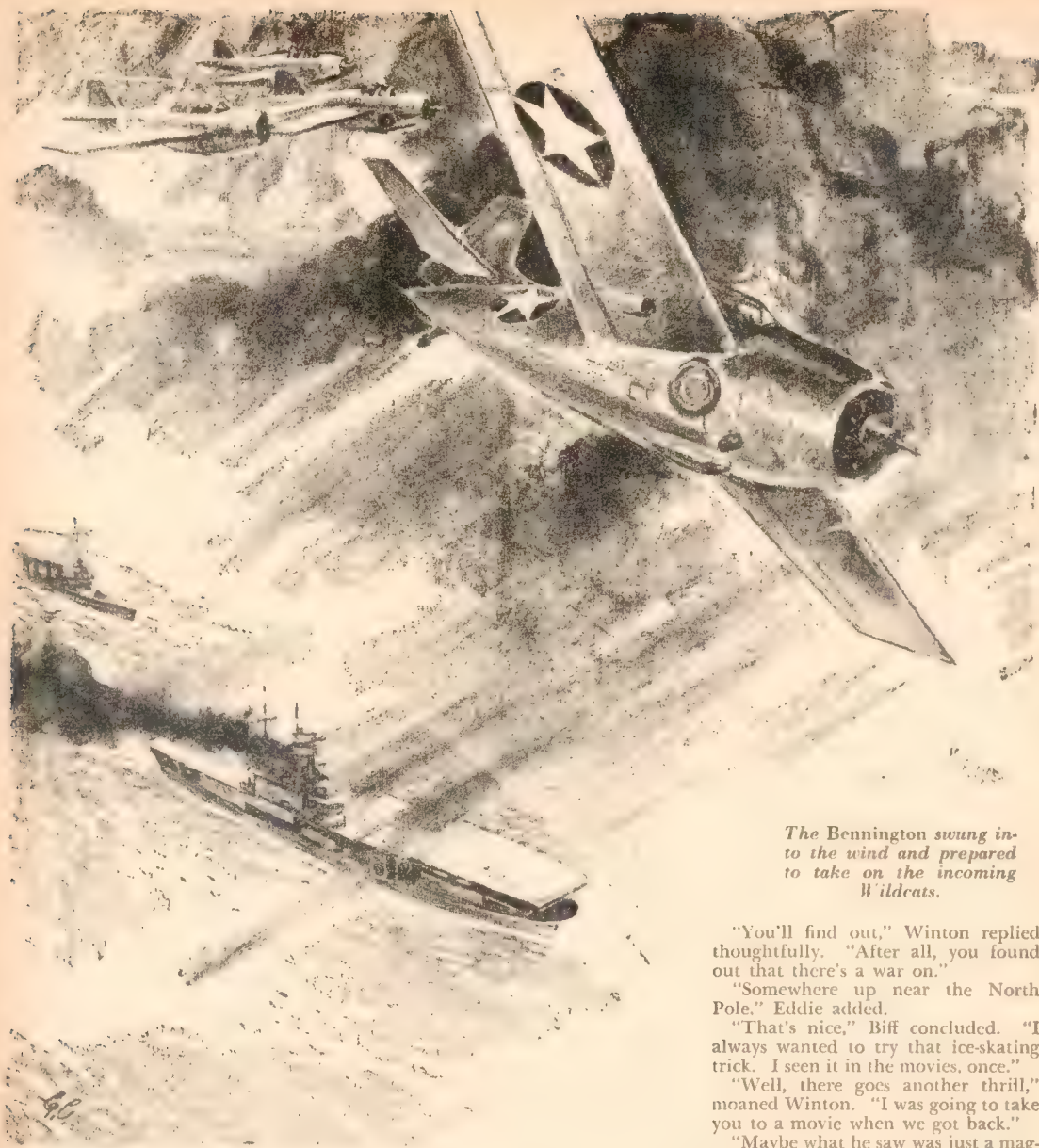
Both Winton and Biff stopped and stared at him.

"Okay," agreed Winton with a flip of his hand. "Maybe you know more about him than we do. Maybe he's your uncle. We wouldn't know."

Prebley wanted to have it out there and then, and tell them just who Commander Ranford was, but another surge of uncertainty swept through him, and he wondered whether he had his money on the wrong horse. He wondered why his feelings ran hot and cold. He wondered again whether Ranford had sent the fighter squadron off just to prove he was a tough A.O., or whether something had slipped in the met. office.

"We've got to stick with him," he finally argued, "all the way to Murmansk—whether we like him or not. There are too many funny things happening aboard this boiler to begin questioning the ability of the officer in charge of air operations."

"We'll have a hell of a time getting to Murmansk unless we have a full fighter force to cover us—if it gets hot," Winton said dubiously.



The Bennington swung into the wind and prepared to take on the incoming Wildcats.

The rest was cut off by the bellow of the ship's whistle. They caught the new jumble of rolls and pitches as the *Bennington* swung into the wind and prepared to take on the incoming Grumman Wildcats.

They clambered up the ladderway and reached the level of the flight-deck. Slipping through a sliding door, they huddled together in the recess under the multiple pom-pom ack-ack turret, and peered into the scud above them for the first signs of the eighteen

planes of Squadron 81. The Talker was barking orders and deploying the plane-handlers and arrester-gear crews about the deck. The Flight-deck Officer, in a heavy bridgecoat, crouched slightly and hurried across the deck, his head bent against the fury of the wind.

"That reminds me," Biff said suddenly, as they peered from below the gun platform at the black specks that were approaching from the north, "where the hell is Murmansk?"

"You'll find out," Winton replied thoughtfully. "After all, you found out that there's a war on."

"Somewhere up near the North Pole," Eddie added.

"That's nice," Biff concluded. "I always wanted to try that ice-skating trick. I seen it in the movies, once."

"Well, there goes another thrill," moaned Winton. "I was going to take you to a movie when we got back."

"Maybe what he saw was just a magic-lantern show at a church supper," suggested Teddy.

"**H**ERE they come!" Prebley broke it up. "Vee-of-vee, so they're still all here."

"Look at that damned steam wind-indicator!" Winton growled, pointing down the deck. "Look at it!"

The steam-jet spuming out of a flush nozzle at the bow end of the deck was whipping back and forth like the knout of some vicious jailer. On the bridge the line officers were watching

it snake back and forth with the change of the wind, and they realized what was about to happen. The bull-horn bellowed again, and more men scurried from the shelter recesses and took positions along the flight deck.

"Clear the sickbay," grumbled Teddy Booth.

"I'll settle for the sickbay," Winton muttered. "It can be worse."

"Here's Deerfield—a swell guy," Winton added. "I hope he gets a break. Just got his squadron when we came aboard."

"Jees! Look at that flight deck!" Thoreau gagged. "It's rising and falling at least thirty feet. If you miss, you hit the rudder. If you don't miss, you'll be making a landing sixty feet up—whew!"

"I wish I could straighten that out," Prebley said.

Deerfield, the squadron commander of No. 81, dropped out of the formation and fought to get her down through the turmoil of wind and pressure turbulence. It was obvious that the plane was not gliding under normal gravity conditions, for the pilot was having to push her nose down and ram home a belt of throttle to keep her headed down for the sea.

"God help him!" breathed Winton, trying to peer around the ack-ack recess to the signal bridge.

At their posts, the plane-handlers and arrester-gear crews huddled against the fury and peered up at the curling plane and back again at the taut cable strands stretched across the deck. The crash-screen wailed and swayed with the roar of the breeze which screeched through the pickets, and piped a dirge that set the teeth of the fire-fighting crew on edge.

"Damn a democracy that doesn't have any more brains than this," Winton grated again. "If they let these guys try to get in here under these conditions, they ought to be—"

"This is a swell time to argue the politics of the mess," Prebley muttered. "After all, you signed up to fight for democracy."

"Not this kind. The democracy I fight for is contained in a one-and-a-half-acre plot, with a six-thousand-dollar bungalow stuck on it. Maybe I'll never get it paid for, but that's my chunk of democracy."

"You can't have a self-sufficient or a self-contained version just for your own convenience," argued Prebley, not knowing why the words were coming at this particular moment. "What about the guy who lives on the other side of you?"

"The guy on one side is making eight grand a year drawing pictures for advertisements—for glamour-gal advertisements that sell lipstick; and he puts in most of his effort trying to prove that lipstick is essential to efficient war work."

"So what! That's democracy," Prebley answered.

"Sure! And on the other side, the guy gets around his bungalow in a wheel chair. He lost both legs in the other war for democracy. Last time I saw him a couple of weeks ago, he was bellowing for a second front. I suppose that's democracy."

"Sure! He has a right to bellow. At least they won't shoot him for it. He probably remembers that someone bellowed back in 1917 for a more aggressive attitude in the war. He got aggressive and lost both legs. . . . Now it's his turn to bellow. It's still democracy."

"Okay!" Winton said, putting his arm across Prebley's shoulder. "I'm glad you're in my section, kid. Maybe you got the answers, and maybe you haven't. When I get down in the mouth, I'll come to Papa and get a work-out. It's things like this that make me think sometimes. That's bad—when a guy begins to think."

"I'm glad it isn't me who has to say 'Come on in!' or 'Clear off for a shore base!'" Teddy Booth commented, dropping to one knee.

CHAPTER NINE

THEY huddled together in the tempest that swirled down the deck and caught at the flanges of the ack-ack gun buttress, and watched Deerfield try to bring the deep-bellied Grumman into position behind the bouncing stern of the *Bennington*.

Above on the signal bridge Commander Ranford, bundled up in a greatcoat, his hat pulled down against the weather, gripped the rail with expressive blue-veined fists. He was a study in frustration, and weighed with the load of responsibility. He checked his wrist-watch, the sky and the cruel vortex of sea over which bounded the white horses of the deep, mad steeplechasers who timed their vaults with precision and taunting economy of effort.

For the fifteenth time since he had come aboard, he wondered how it came to pass that he was here—aboard the *Bennington*, of all vessels. He champed on the subject silently while Lieutenant Deerfield struggled out there to get his Grumman up to the bounding lip of the carrier deck. Stiffening with the cold and quaking within, Commander Ranford watched another segment of his world cracking and chipping off in chunks.

"It's very risky, sir," the bridge Talker muttered.

"That's what we're here for. Don't wash him out yet."

The Signal Officer rammed his hands deeper into his overcoat pockets, and wondered where Ranford found the courage to take such a

stand. It would be a miracle if one pilot got back on that deck safely. Seventeen more were circling through the typhoon rage that screamed above.

Deerfield put on a game show. He held her dead on the point of the swaying lip, and eased his throttle forward, notch by notch. The big Grumman champed at her spindrift bit, and the wind thundered off her wings like a northeaster off a headsail.

He kept her at it, forcing her forward inch by inch, attempting to calculate to the foot the varying elevations of the broad deck approach. It was a matter of supreme guesswork, and he was dicing with the custodian of Fiddler's Green, whether he timed his last few yards with the instant of indecision when the deck had reached the peak of its pitch.

"A damned good try, at any rate," Commander Ranford muttered.

The Grumman was creeping up toward the deck, which was thundering into the wind at thirty-two knots. Here was a display of beautiful timing. Gradually the wheels crept over the lip of the deck, and Deerfield chanced his gear again and tried to force her up to the first transverse cable.

"He's done it!" the Signal Officer started to say. Then he winced, and tried to force his reflexes to help him turn away.

The stern end of the deck started to dip as if it was trying to accommodate the game try of the squadron commander. Then suddenly, and with the fury of a mass gone berserk, the deck snapped up again with the cruelty of a giant fly-swatter, and all of Deerfield's efforts went in vain. The blow drove the dangling hook high into the stern end of the fuselage. There was another wrench of outraged metal, and the legs of the undercarriage gear were punched into the wheel wells, and she plopped hard on her belly. The flailing prop-tips slashed at the black teak deck and threw battle-bent broadsword blades into the air.

"Over he goes! Get Joe!" yelled Winton.

The Grumman Wildcat continued on her chin, scraping out a long wound; with a bellow of metal her tail came up, and for an instant she pivoted on her prop-shaft, then slapped over hard and dug her sternpost deep into the teak.

The bull-horn gnashed its metal teeth and grated frantic orders. The Hot Papas rushed from their posts at the blast-screen, grotesque in their ungainly asbestos suits, and struggled to get Deerfield's hatch-cover back. One of the fire-control crew groveled in with his big metal cutters and soon had a chunk chewed out of the cockpit wall.

They dragged Deerfield out, an oil-blackened mess, and supported him

while he struggled and flailed with his arms like some scarecrow figure in a cartoon film.

The plane-handlers and arrester-gear crews swarmed all over the inverted hghter, and huddling against the wind, stood aside while a small deck tractor chugged out from a recess in the island and backed up to the tail. They snaked in a chain; and the tractor, on a signal from the bridge, dragged the hulk to the aft aircraft elevator.

There was a minute of consultation, and finally the wreck was pulled over to the edge of the starboard side and twisted so that it took up as little of the deck as possible.

"Don't tell me!" began Teddy, staring up at the signal bridge.

"No! God, no!" breathed Winton. "They're not risking another?"

"They're flagging in Rippy Hastings. . . . Poor Rippy!"

"Why the hell—"

But Rippy, a small chunky lad who had a face like a stooge character in a comic strip, was swinging past the port rail, nodding to the bridge as if to encourage them. Rippy was game.

"If anyone can, Rippy will," Teddy tried to say, but the wind rammed most of it down his throat.

The second Wildcat came around tight and almost went over on her back when a chinook blast caught his lower wing-tip. Rippy somehow rammed on top rudder, gave her the gun and pulled out to come around in the other direction.

The Flight-deck Officer was out on the deck again, semaphoring grimly with his paddles and taking the odd chance of glancing up at the bridge. He hoped *someone* would see the impossibility of it all and wash them out.

Rippy came down low and risked the dollops of spray that snapped up from the wind-hounded combers. Any one of them might catch a prop-blade and snap it off at the cuff.

"He's gonner try to crawl up over it, the damn' fool!"

"Neck or nothing!"

FOR a minute, Rippy's Wildcat was lost below the undulating stern of the *Bennington*; and then suddenly it came up, bouncing on the bolsters of slipstream that thundered around the cruiser stern of the carrier.

"A formal investigation of the cause of these crashes," quoted Winton, "will be held in the Captain's quarters at four bells."

"Jeess! Wait until the guy crashes," growled Biff.

The deck came up again, and Rippy disappeared. There was a dull rending crash, and they knew he'd hit the under portion of the flight-deck and probably had dropped to the hangar deck level of the overhanging stern. That is—he would if he had any luck.

The plane-handlers in their bright blue jerseys fluttered through the blast of wind to get to the lip. Winton, Prebley, Thoreau and Booth stayed clear and watched aft.

"He bounced off!" gasped Biff. "Look—the escort destroyer is cutting in to pick him up."

"There won't be anything to pick up—the way he hit. Good God!" stormed Winton, stalking out to the guide-line to glare up at the signal deck.

"Stand clear!" the bull-horn ranted again. "Deck-crews take emergency positions. Stand clear!"

"Don't you see what he's doing?" squealed Teddy Booth. "The law of averages rears its ugly head. If he can get one out of three down, he'll try to get them in. If this isn't murder, what is?"

The package of wreckage that had been Rippy Hastings' Grumman was bobbing away through the stern froth whipped up by the multiple screws of the *Bennington*. A four-stacker was greyhounding, her prow dipping deep in the rollers to get there in time to get Rippy out. They could see one wing-tip with a gay service cocarde gleaming under the combers that swished up and tried to douse her colors, and they sensed that the wing had been wrenched clear with the impact of the crash.

There wouldn't be much left there to salvage or rescue. . . .

Eddie Prebley tried to hold back the revulsion that boiled within him. He moved off to be alone and ponder the cruel tradition that forced the man who was his father to take the responsibility for the carnage that was being hacked out here. He wondered just what type of man this could be, who could stand there on the bridge and watch these youngsters attempt the almost impossible.

"He's either insane, or this sudden load of responsibility has drained off every drop of common sense that God and the years of service has given him."

Prebley was satisfied with that assay of the Air Officer. He felt he had provided a reasonable excuse for his actions. After all, this was war, and certain chances were justified. He considered again that Navy Cross, and coldly cursed the possibility that the Commander was trying to live up to some long-forgotten feat of heroism. A War One hero, as Teddy Booth had put it so bitterly, trying to recapture the faint aura of a high boiling point of his youth. What was a feat of heroism in those days of Eagle boats, DeHavilland flying coffins and Camel shipboard scouts would be mere routine today. Why wouldn't these old-timers study the new book—accept facts and conditions?

He found himself out on the flight-deck now, wandering aimlessly in and

out of the bright-jerseyed deckhands. He tried to peer up at the signal bridge, hoping he could catch the Air Officer's eye—half believing that he could transmit an appeal without a word or gesture. He looked up and tried to pick him out of the phalanx of blue banked against the harsh service gray of the superstructure.

The Air Officer was no longer there! "Stand clear of the *amidships elevator*!" the bull-horn boomed.

THE crash-screen was being lowered, and the Flight-deck Officer was standing wide-legged, watching a Grumman Wildcat being raised to the flight-deck. The plane handlers swarmed all over her and struggled to steady the fluttering wings.

"Stand clear of *propeller*!" thundered the bull-horn.

"Now what?" Eddie Prebley questioned.

"Start engine!"

"Your ten is gonna get you five, I think," Teddy Booth was tugging at Eddie's sleeve.

"What are they trying now?"

"The Air Officer!" Booth plopped out breathlessly. "He's taking off—himself, to see how tough it is."

"My father?" gasped Prebley—and then stood stock still and stared full into Booth's face. "You mean the A.O.? He's taking off in a—in a Grumman?"

"What do you mean, your father? I said the Air Officer—Commander Ranford. Now there's a guy who's nuts—for money."

"Yeh? Well, five will still get you ten—he can do it."

"Sure! Sure, he'll try something to make up for all this. But what did you mean—your name's Prebley, isn't it?"

"Forget it! I just misunderstood what you said."

"He couldn't be your stepfather, could he?" demanded Booth.

"He couldn't—and he isn't. Is that clear? Come on. Let's watch this and get ready to peel off five fish."

There was a jumble of semaphore messages from the signal lamp on the bridge wing. The bull-horn ranted and cleared the deck, and the cowed Pratt and Whitney motor opened up with a roar. Another Wildcat came down and screamed along the port rail, but was flagged off wildly by the Flight-deck Officer. A red lamp gleamed on the stack, and another flag went up in the wind-stretched halliards.

"I hope he's not your father," Teddy Booth was saying, "because he gonna dive in the drink. I'll bet he's never done a carrier landing in his life."

"Good!" Prebley said. "Then he'll have no inhibitions about it."

"I guess this is democracy," Winton said as he pulled Prebley into the



shelter of the ack-ack platform. "If it is, we're all nuts."

"Rather a nice form of insanity at that, though," protested Eddie.

"I wonder now what to hope," Winton went on. "If he makes it, he'll go through with the rest of the show, and the other poor devils have to try again."

The ship's whistle split the air with a warning and they tried to get her around again and straighten out the steam wind-indicator. The deck still rose and fell in uneven jolts. A crew captain jazzed the motor again and

There wouldn't be much left to salvage or rescue.

looked around uncertainly as if he half-expected he'd be ordered to switch off and call it a day. The plane-handlers and fire-fighters stood about like strange figures who had suddenly found themselves in an environment that was new and uncomfortable. Through it all wailed the whirl and tumult, flapping jackets and mufflers, and needling bare hands and cheeks with icy stitches that drew the skin tight.

The Exec. came out first, a bandaged ghost of a man. He looked about as though he felt an explanation was due the shapeless ring of faces that turned toward him. Commander Ranford followed, buckling the chin-piece of an old flying helmet. He wore a parachute and life-jacket over his Navy jacket, but nothing more. Regulation shoes and a pair of light-weight pigskin gloves completed his outfit. He stood in the harsh brittle light created by the reflection that erupted off the gray of the island superstructure, a cold-eyed command-

ing figure, slim about the hips. He gave the deck and plane crew a look that left them numb and speechless.

"Perhaps if we waited a short time, sir," the Exec. was saying, searching his mind for a new device that would stay the Air Officer.

"They can't wait much longer," Ranford said, looking up at the covey of Wildcats that still circled above.

"No sir."

"All right. Let's have it," Ranford called up to the crew captain.

The suety-faced C.P.O. climbed down with the clearance sheet in his hand. "You know all about this type, sir?" he asked hollowly.

"I'm supposed to, am I not?" The Commander took the sheet and scribbled his initials on it without bothering to read the data.

"Yes, sir. Thank you, sir—and best of luck!"

"Thanks. I'll be all right."

Commander Ranford climbed up, adjusted his seat and snapped the safety straps over his shoulder. The plane-handlers struggled with the wing-tips and horsed her around until she was dead on the guide-line.

"This'll be good," husked Winton.

"I remember the first time I went off a deck," Eddie said slowly. "I kept saying, 'The ailerons are used for maintaining lateral stability.' I was afraid I'd forget how to fly."

"Maybe this is history. How do we know?" Winton suggested with a catch in his voice.

COMMANDER RANFORD looked up at the signal bridge and flipped a two-fingered salute at Captain Tennant. Someone blinked a green light on the bridge, and the Wildcat stiffened like a stallion with the first cut of a quirt as Ranford moved the throttle up. Then with a startled flip her tail came up, fanned back and forth with the joy of release and went screaming down the deck.

"Jees!" gasped Teddy Booth. "The guy can fly!"

They watched the mortar-nosed Wildcat pelt down the deck like a projectile. Ranford held her dead on, compensated skillfully for the up-draft under the bow, and kept her on a dead straight course without taking an inch of altitude until he was clear. Then with a scream of power that hammered the decibels back at the deck crew, he brought the Grumman up into a climbing turn that might have been plotted on a set of French curves.

"And to think what five bucks would buy in Murmansk!" Teddy Booth gagged.

"He still has to get back on," Winton observed, "and am I rooting for the guy!"

"He'll get back," Prebley asserted.

Booth looked at him thoughtfully. "I still think this is a family gag," he taunted.

"Sure! The Navy's always making cozy arrangements like that."

They crept back to the shelter of the gun platform again and watched the Wildcat climbing for altitude. Ranford took her upstairs through the howl of the storm and then put her through several routine acrobatics.

"Now he's gonna play tricks!" Booth moaned.

The Wildcat went up in a wild zoom, hung on a stall at the top, fell off drunkenly and then blipped into a tight spin.

"This is it," husked Winton, peering through slitted eyes.

"Holy smoke!"

"Maybe he is good," suggested Prebley.

They watched as the Wildcat came down in a perfect spin and draw out as smooth as a hot knife through butter. The Commander brought her out fifty feet above the reaching combers, sleeked the throttle up the quadrant and came around into the wind.

"Just like that!" Winton said, amazed. "He'll have us coming in off a loop after this!"

"He's not back on yet," reminded Booth.

That made Prebley wince, but he moved out of the shelter and saw that the Flight-deck Officer had taken up his position with his landing paddles. The plane-handlers and other deck crew members huddled low in the catwalks and watched, chalk-faced and anxious.

Commander Ranford wasted no time in getting up to the lip. The deck danced in short jerky flourishes, and the high rollers pounded at the hull and made her spill dangerously. Still he came on, assuming a normal approach. His flaps were only slightly down, and the arrester hook streamed back at an angle of forty-five degrees.

"He's gonna hit it fast. They'd better break out another crash-barrier."

"That's smart, when you come to think of it. If he gets a bad break, he can give her the gun and probably clear," added Winton, without taking his eyes off the approaching Wildcat.

The Wildcat bounced against the pounding of the wind. She caught the boost of a boomer that came off a whaleback of a wave and clambered up, showing the detail of her underside.

"Here he goes!"

But Ranford corrected and eased the nose forward again with a knout of throttle. The deck went down with a bash of pressure, and they saw the pilot fishtail her smartly to brake her forward speed again. She came on, fluttering at the tips, uncertain with

the gestures of something feminine and dainty. They could see Commander Ranford with his hatch-cover back, his head over the side, watching the movement of the deck.

"She's coming up again! If he can only—"

The deck rose and twisted tortuously as if it were struggling to get away from this midge seeking sanctuary. They watched, intent on the movement; and for an instant the lip blotted out all sight of the Wildcat and they closed their eyes, remembering Rippy Hastings.

THERE was an instant of indecision on the part of the wind and wave. The flight-deck was tilted for its full length and aimed at the scud above. Then from nowhere came the Air Officer's Wildcat, skimming her wheels over the lip and fish-tailing hard to hold back. She dipped in, dabbed her wheels down, bounced once and seemed to squash until the hook snatched at the last deck-cable.

There was a fright-muffled cry and then a throaty cheer as the snarling, jerking Wildcat dragged the cable out full and came to a champing halt. A dozen men in many-colored jerseys were on her like a pack of banderilleros from the safety catwalks. The bull-horn took up the bellow of triumph, and the Grumman was wheeled forward to the elevator.

Teddy Booth peeled off a five-spot and said: "It was worth it. I learned something."

Commander Ranford climbed down, brushing his gloved hands together. Prebley, unable to restrain himself, tore out and rushed up breathlessly.

"Anything wrong?" the A.O. asked coldly.

"Wrong? No sir. It was—you—you did splendidly. I'm proud, sir!"

"I could consider this a breach of discipline, you know," Ranford said. "I think I will. You'll take lunch with me—at noon. That's all!"

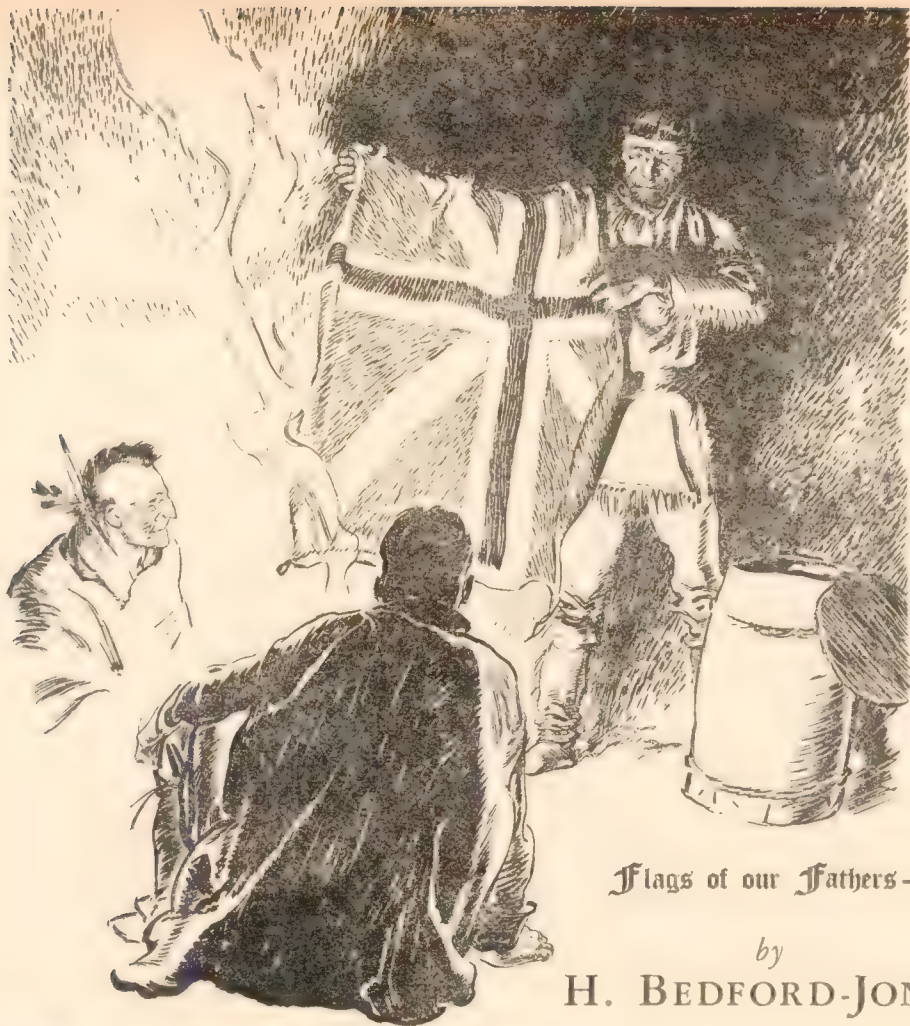
"Yes sir. I'll try to bear up—and take it. A marvelous effort, sir!"

The C.P.O. stood grinning while the Commander signed the engine log. He was all hands and feet in his effort to keep from slapping Ranford across the shoulders. Commander Ranford, all dignity and supreme in the knowledge that he had won a point, strode across to the island, nodded to the speechless Signal Officer and said: "Flag them ashore. It's a trifle sticky out there. We won't risk any more."

"My God!" gasped Winton from the shelter of the gun platform. "Now, there's a decision!"

"And we go to Murmansk with only one fighter squadron," mooned Teddy Booth. "Won't those Messerschmitts have a picnic!"

This story of a carrier on convoy through the Battle of the Atlantic continues in our February issue.



Flags of our Fathers—VI

by

H. BEDFORD-JONES

Flag of the Mayflower

WE came, oppressed, enslaved, seeking the tolerance we neither knew nor gave, searching the freedom men denied us as we in turn denied it. Yet our hearts warned us more truly, as did the flag we bore, with the red cross of St. George fielded by the saltire of St. Andrew. We streamed it at the Mayflower's jackstaff, amid doubt and stress and sufferings; we planted it full sturdily into New World earth. Human we and fallible, men set in error; but these twain

crosses upbore and steadied our hearts to new wayfaring upon the path of blessed sufferance.

WILLIAMS had only recently been a man of deeply respected position, holding an office of honor, the affection of his townfolk and a steady income; he had, too, a devoted wife and two children. These things were lost to him, not one by one, but all in a moment. He had lost everything

except his liberty and the clothes he stood in. While his sudden flight had cheated the arresting officers, it left him in poor shape to face the mid-winter wilderness.

During the past three weeks he had been wandering in search of refuge, enfeebled by illness, eating where he could, passed on from one Indian lodge to another; but this new peril had caught him unawares. He was a gaunt man, not particularly powerful, with craggy, resolute features that

faced into the blizzard like a rock. About his eyes lay a gentleness, almost a weakness in its kindly sympathy, sometimes found in persons of exceptional will-power. It did not detract from his indomitable air, but he was not handsome; such men of iron seldom are.

This blizzard had come up yesterday. When the first blinding snow eddied down he got off the trail, and had been totally lost ever since. The cold was not extreme and his furred garments protected him from the worst frost. Just the same, he was about done for now, and knew it full well.

He had learned the peril of getting into drifts; twice during the night he had nearly gone under for good. Yet he was plunging ahead, keeping to the trees where the snow was thinner, still desperately hoping to find some landmark. Pause he dare not, lest he sleep and die. He lacked anything with which to make a fire. And still the snow came down endlessly on the howling blast.

Ahead loomed a ridge crowned by massive pines. Under them the ground was nearly clear for the trees screened out the whirling flakes, though nothing could screen out that biting wind. Williams stumbled up the slope and gained the comparative shelter, stamping his feet clear of snow with weary relief. He was numb all over, and thirst tormented him, since the streams were frozen and snow was a tantalizing substitute for water.

Hunger had become an old story during these weeks of precipitate flight. An attack of recurrent fever had drained his strength, and now, when he briefly halted, he realized that his physical exhaustion was acute. The end must be close.

Aware that the blizzard came from the north, he had headed into it, thus keeping his general direction for safety. Where he now was, he had not the faintest idea. He had taken the trail for a certain Wampanoag town, a little huddle of redskin shelters well known to him in happier days; he was far astray. He might keep on endlessly and strike nothing—there was nothing all the way to the French settlements in Canada. He would not get far, however, for his body was failing rapidly. He was a city man, not a woods hunter.

AS he stood there, shaking with fatigue and cold, he caught sight of something moving under the trees. His jaw fell; he could not believe his own eyes. Nor did he believe them, for a moment; this must be some hallucination. He saw a roly-poly brown child, a mere infant, playing with a roly-poly dog, a puppy—chasing it, tumbling with it, squealing delightedly at it. And the brown-skinned babe was practically naked—in this blizzard!

Williams peered around. Nothing broke the sweeping trees and snow; no wigwam, no sign of human life. What he saw was incredible. Only at the sharp yap-yap-yapping of the pup, and the squeal of the infant, did he know it was real. He stepped forward hastily and they became aware of his presence.

The puppy licked the snow and stared at him, panting and unconcerned. The baby started to run, slipped, and went sprawling. Williams made a quick step forward, stooped, and caught up the child in his arms. Opening his fur-lined cloak,



he wrapped it about the squirming little body and looked down at it, smiling. The child laughed; then it clutched at his stubble-bearded chin.

"Poor child!" said he. "Whence came ye? At least your need is greater than mine, since garments you have none."

The branches facing him moved and parted. A paint-streaked face was glaring at him above a bell-mouthed musket. Quick relief seized him; the baby's father, no doubt!

"Greeting, brother! I have come to visit you," he said in the Narraganset tongue, which he spoke readily. "I need food and shelter; I am tired and lost."

To his surprise, since he accounted all redskins friendly, the Indian snarled in anger.

"This is Indian country, not white country," he said in the same tongue. "White men who come here, die."

An Indian with a musket was unusual; decidedly, this was serious. Williams gave his name, which was known afar among the redskins.

"I'm a brother of your sachem, Miantonomo, and his uncle the great sachem Canonicus is my friend," he went on. "My own people seek me; I'm a fugitive. Aid me to reach your sachems, my brother!"

The painted features sneered at him.

"So you claim Canonicus as friend! The sachem loves none of your people; he hates them all and fears them."

Something strange about all this; dreadfully strange. Williams felt his heart sink. He opened the cloak, and the babe reached up again for his roughened chin, in delight.

"You see? He knows that I do not lie, my brother. I claim your aid."

The redskin snarled angrily.

"You dog!" he snapped. "Squamet would gladly see you die with all your people! He wants none of you in his wigwam except the dead."

"It's not what we want, but what we must put up with," Williams said dryly, in English. Then he switched back to the Indian tongue. "In the name of your sachem, brother! Dare you deny what I ask in his name?"

"Turn among the trees. Follow the dog," said the other, sullenly. "He shows the trail."

So, indeed, the pup was doing, with roguish eye and flirt of ears. Williams followed him among the trees; he was quite incapable of reading a snow-trail. It was only a moment or two when a gasp of astonishment broke from him. So perfectly hidden among thick trees as to be invisible at a dozen paces, stood a large wigwam of poles, bent in at the top, the sides covered with bark and plaited mats.

The Indian, following, called out. A squaw appeared; she was young, not ill-looking, and gaped at them until Williams smiled and extended his burden. She took the babe and darted into the wigwam, and Williams followed. He was accustomed to Indian odors; the blessed warmth of the interior welcomed him, and when he stumbled over a pile of furs, he went to pieces and fell in complete collapse. He awakened to darkness and the howl of wind outside; and here, a ruddy little fire that lighted up the place. He had slept for some hours. It was night. How late, he could not tell.

Sitting up, he wondered if his memory of the arrival could be a dream. The lodge was empty; all sign of the woman, the pup, the child, had disappeared. Beside him sat a calabash of water and an elm-bark platter holding a johnnycake of cornmeal fried in bear's grease; the savor of it filled his nostrils. With a mutter of thanks he seized upon it and began to eat.

It was cold, and had been cooked a long time; therefore the night must be late. Yet the fire had been replenished. . . . Suddenly his brain froze for an instant: the shadows were alive! Opposite him was a chest made from a hollowed-out section of tree-trunk, and beside it hung furs drying on frames—and there, seated immobile, was a man whose eyes watched him. An old man, an old Indian, seamed and shriveled, wrapped in a bearskin!

Williams addressed him and was ignored completely. But a step sounded outside, the flap was thrown back for a moment, and a man entered the wigwam and dropped with a grunt beside the fire. New incredulity gripped Williams. This was a white man in Indian garb. Blue eyes looked at him from scarred, pockmarked, brutalized features.

WILLIAMS broke out: "A white man! Who are you, friend? Where am I? Who's this old Indian?"

"Call me neither friend nor white," growled the other. The tone was vaguely familiar. "Who? None of your accursed business."

"At least tell me whom to thank for this hospitality to a poor fugitive—"

"You fool, you're not a guest but a captive!" broke in the other, with a sneering laugh. "A likely yarn! Fugitive, sithal! And from what be you fugitive?"

"Prison, and sending in chains to England."

"Indeed? One of that accursed dog Bradford's victims?"

"No, no! He's governor of the Plymouth colony. I'm from the Massachusetts Bay settlements, from Salem."

"All tarred wi' the same stick." The other broke into vicious oaths. "All damned Puritans are alike—hard of heart, bitter of soul, and to the whipping-post with any who don't agree! Did you break their Sabbath law?"

Williams smiled. "No, friend. I was one of their ministers; minister of Salem, in fact. I broke their laws and would do away with all their laws. I'd have the government entirely aside from religion, and any man free to hold what belief he likes. That's sedition and rebellion, and so I'm here."

He went on with his meal, while the other spoke in a low voice with the old immobile Indian. But Williams had placed him now, and was lost in astonishment. This white man whose hatred and ferocity were so evident, was no other than the Indian who had received him here; a renegade, in other words.

Never had Roger Williams heard of any white man having joined the redskins. In this winter of 1635, with the new settlements a scant fifteen years of age, such a thing was unknown. He was curious rather than alarmed. When he had drunk deeply, he got out his pipe and pouch of Virginia leaf, lit the pipe with an ember from the fire, and spoke to the renegade.

"Friend, where are your wife and babe?"

"Gone," snapped the other. "When men have work afoot, it's no place for women. There's more than one pair o' white ears nailed to the pole above you—and yours will join them soon! A ranting hypocritical preacher, eh? Well worth sending to hell!"



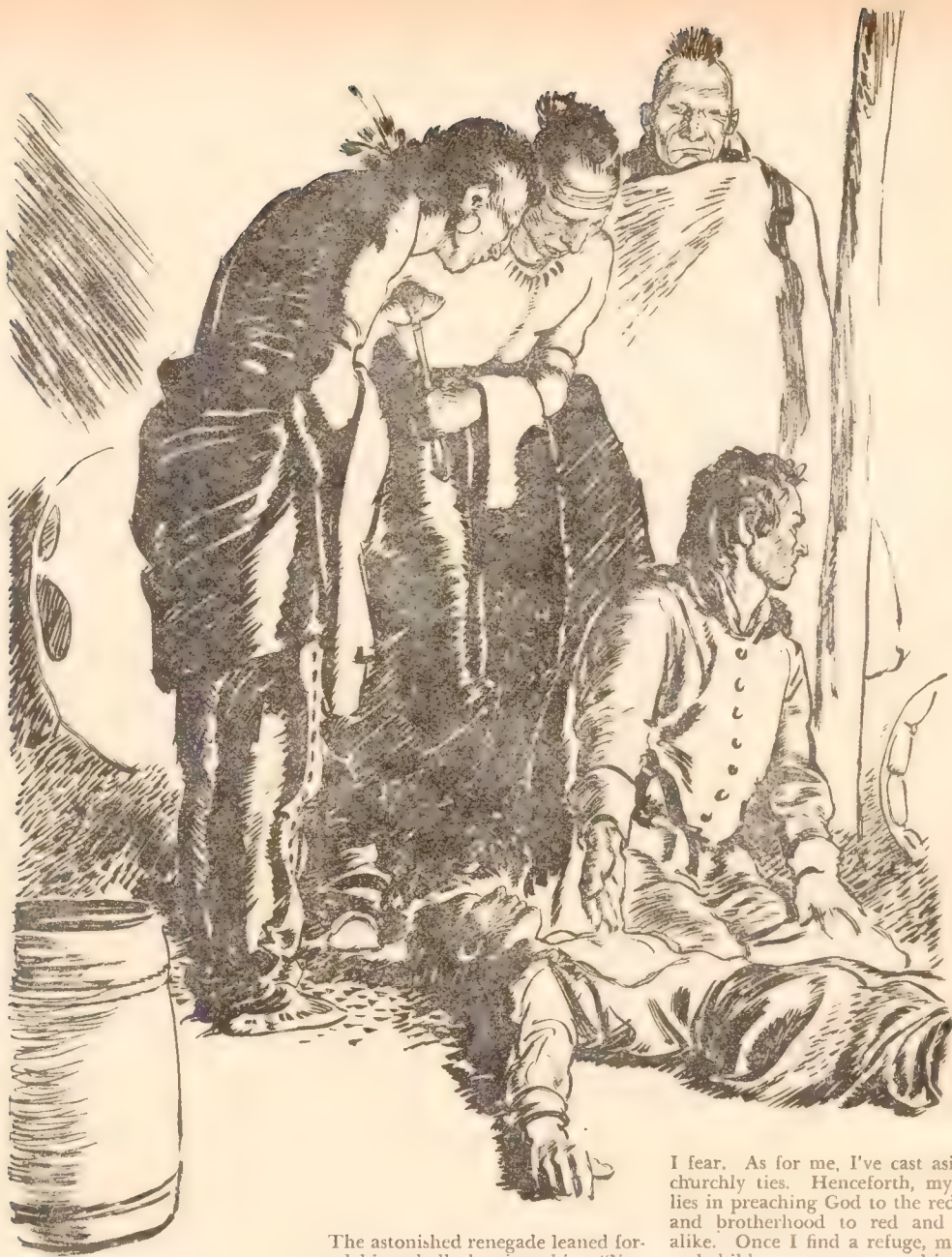
Williams stepped forward hastily; pup and infant became aware of his presence.

True enough; dried grisly tokens of humanity adorned the poles, and a quiver shook Williams.

"Why do you hate the ministers of God's word?" he asked, probing this embittered heart. The renegade bared yellow teeth in a wolfish snarl.

"They made a grid o' my back wi' the lash, and why? After fourteen year, it's a grid still, so deep went the whip! Because I had brought in secret from England, me, a bond-servant, a broadside play writ by Will Shakespeare, and was found reading of it!"

Some bond-man who had run away from the settlements, then. Williams nodded; evidently this renegade was a bit addled in the wits.



"And you found shelter and refuge among the red men, eh? Even as I. Shakespeare!" he repeated musingly. "Shakespeare! A pleasant, smiling man. I remember seeing him of an afternoon in Paul's, at the strolling hour. And often, when I was at the Charterhouse, he'd be walking and talking with others between Holborn Bridge and Blackfriars."

The astonished renegade leaned forward, his eyeballs showing white. "You saw him? You, a preacher who must hold every strolling player a damned poxy devil's spawn?"

Williams laughed. "Friend, little you know of me or my beliefs! Aye, you have some license to berate all Puritans. They fled hither to escape oppression and the rule of bishops, and they strive to keep their freedom by force—an unwise, intolerant habit,

I fear. As for me, I've cast aside all churchly ties. Henceforth, my work lies in preaching God to the red men, and brotherhood to red and white alike. Once I find a refuge, my wife and children may escape and join me, and others who seek freedom of speech and thought. Tell me of yourself. Your name?"

"You'll do naught. You'll die when the war-party gets here," snapped the renegade, then turned and spoke again in a mutter with the old Indian, who knew no English. The threat struck into Williams. It might well come true.

Although friendliness prevailed on the frontier, there was no lack of blood and killing. Even the great sachem, Canonicus, hated and feared the English and kept himself afar from them; Williams, who knew his nephew and other chiefs well, had never sighted this aloof and almost legendary ruler. The Pequots, also, were bitter enemies of the whites; and this renegade was too obviously an instrument of bloody vengeance.

"How came you here, friend?" Williams asked. "Tell me, I beg of you."

The renegade finished his talk and stuffed a pipe. The tobacco seemed to mellow him.

"You'd have had a bullet in your wame now, but for picking up the

chance to sketch to another white man his own sorry tale.

"I ran away in that first year when they were dying like flies, and was accounted dead. Fourteen year I've been an Indian, and have almost forgot my own speech. Here one, now another, I've taken their ears—even as they cropped mine," he added, shaking his lank long hair to show his earless skull. "But I've left none alive to tell of it!"

"You've suffered, friend, far worse than I," said Williams gently. "Yet hatred is a sorry motive and engenders sorrow. Now that you've found refuge, a pleasant wife, a fine child, you should lend yourself to higher thoughts and things. Hatred corrodes the heart, as rust a knife."

thrust open his shirt and held it aside, to show his white chest.

The dying firelight showed a fiery red mark, not unlike an arrow in shape, above his heart. It was gone, as he leaned forward and put more wood on the fire.

"Mark o' the Manitou, these redskins term it," he said, "and honor me for it instead of deeming me devil-marked. Aye, the babe had the same mark—well, well, I'll show you somewhat to think on, stranger! Look at this, now."

He leaned over to the log trunk and swung open the lid, and took out something that the leaping flames disclosed in gaudy colors. Williams found new astonishment as it unfolded. A flag, worn and tattered but still whole; a flag of blue, with a St. Andrew's cross of white, and over this the broad red cross of St. George.

"There ye be—it's the *Mayflower's* flag," he said, cackling with laughter. "I stole it when I ran away; my master had kept it well. I stole it, to spite them all. And some day when we bring fire into the settlements I'll nail



"The Manitou has given a sign!" Williams cried loudly. "You asked for a sign, and it has been given!"

child," said he. "Robin o' Gants has spared no white man, nor will. That was my name in the old days, when I was a strolling player; then smallpox killed my poor wife and marred my face so I could no more go on the boards, and my son was lost, and I was bound for debt and brought hither when the *Mayflower* sailed. Hither, to freedom!"

His laugh rang in harsh mockery. He went on, perhaps glad of the

The renegade burst into a jeering laugh. Robin o' Gants, if that were his name, made it plain that he had no use for such talk.

"You're a fool, Master Williams," he said bluntly. "I had a son in England; he'd be a fine grown lad of seventeen now, and for aught I know may still be alive and well—though like me, he had the mark o' Satan above his heart, as they called it." With an impulsive movement he

it to the door o' Plymouth meeting-house and watch it burn—"

His words trailed off into silence. The old Indian spoke, and he made answer, putting his wild thought into Narraganset speech and then staring moodily at the folds of cloth.

Williams, too, stared at it. The flag that had come on the *Mayflower* fifteen years ago! A curious thing to find here in this abode of hatred. Yet he understood what even this poor

wrecked scatterbrain could not understand.

Behind the mask of embittered venom was something else. To this man who had lived through so many hells, there remained memory. To him, the flag spoke of all that had been and was no more—the streets of London, the long green fields, the company of strolling players who lived by hedge and hostel, the gay brave days of love and hope and gallant youth. Even so might Roger Williams have carried with him from Salem such a flag, had there been one to bring, that it might have refreshed his mind with those truths and ideals momentarily belied by petty men, and petty tyranny.

"Aye," said he thoughtfully, reaching out and touching the woolen stuff, "it speaks so loud of things unseen, friend! All the deep mischiefs that gird us fall away as we listen to the words arisen in our hearts. England is England still, despite the vexing tides and the sorrows we deem so great—"

Robin caught at the flag with a slave of oaths.

"A pox on your fine words!" Ferocity leaped into his pitted features again; a poor wretch of impulse and whimsy, thought Williams. "Your ears go to join those above you, quick enough. You, who dared to claim the friendship of the great sachem! They will burn you for that and they should be here by now, mayhap with a captive or two!"

"Not they," said Williams. "I'm brother to Miantonomo, and that's enough to awe them."

His confident words had ill echo in his heart. He watched the renegade stuff the flag into the trunk again, then Robin rose. He went to the flap, held it up, and left the wigwam, letting in a welcome chill breath of pure air.

WILLIAMS smoker! on. Twice he addressed the immobile, silent old Indian, who looked at him but gave no indication of hearing him; the wrinkled face was like stone within its bearskin hood. He knocked out his pipe, rose, went to the entrance and looked out. The wind had passed, the stars were out, the trees drooped heavy with snow, and the moon hung in the west; evidently the night was nearly through. He must have slept longer than he knew.

He came back and sat down. Now he comprehended why the squaw and infant were gone, and what was in the wind. Despite friendly relations, among both whites and reds were a certain number of malcontented rascals ever ready to make secret raids, to strike and run, without the sanction or knowledge of their chiefs. Treaties were made to be broken by such scoundrels, and the renegade Robin

was obviously one of such, perhaps leading them in their bloody work.

Poor man! Compassion rose in him at thought of Robin; it was quickly diverted. From the outside came the sound of voices. The old man moved, brought into sight a pouch of paint, and with one finger streaked white upon his cheeks and chin; he accomplished this rapidly and neatly, and was again immobile when the entrance was thrown open and a number of figures became visible. One of them was propelled violently forward, and fell face down.

The voices ceased; the group outside were, apparently, staring in some astonishment at the old Indian. One of them, then another, addressed him in evident respect, even fear, but of this Williams took no heed. He had just discovered that the figure lying almost beside him was that of a white man, arms firmly bound, and now unconscious. That he had been driven along with rods was obvious from his tattered shirt and bloody back; blood from head-wounds lay in a frozen smear over face and neck, and his cheeks were streaked with black paint.

A man? No more than a boy, beardless and haggard, evidently in a faint from exhaustion and pain.

The old Indian spoke in a dialect unknown to Williams, and at some length, in a thin angry voice, then fell silent again. Three Indians came in; they were painted, armed, and lightly



clad, as though for the war-trail. After them the renegade entered. Williams knew none of the three. They seemed little interested in him, and their attention was fastened upon the old man, who was obviously some sort of chief, perhaps one of their wizards or *jongleurs*, as the French termed them. Certainly his white paint indicated this, just as the black paint on the captive indicated that he had been doomed to torture and death.

One after another, the three redskins addressed the old man, who made no reply. Their talk, thought Williams, was apparently in the Pequot tongue, which he scarcely knew at all; he could not follow them. The renegade, his face now painted and his lank hair gathered up into a scalp-lock, sat with a glitter in his blue eyes, apparently of sardonic amusement.

THAT the three warriors were not Narragansets, Williams concluded when the old man produced a stone pipe and the ceremony of smoking was begun. Things began to come clear. The three took the pipe first; this, then, was their country, and the old Indian was a guest, not of their tribe. If they were Pequots, he must be either Wampanoag or Narraganset.

The ceremonial puffs finished, a rapid and impassioned talk began. Williams made no move to arouse the captive youth; his unconsciousness was merciful. How to save the boy he could not see, due to his ignorance of the tongue, but suddenly he reached out and took the pipe and put it to his lips.

There was an instant outburst of furious protest. Knives flashed, a tomahawk leaped out, but already a puff of smoke came from the lips of Williams. At a gesture from the old man, the anger died, and Williams seized the chance to speak.

"I have smoked with you, my brothers. I sit in your council. As the brother of Miantonomo I am known to be a sachem among the Narraganset people."

The old Indian suddenly interrupted, which was an act of distinct discourtesy.

"Is my brother a warrior? I do not see the feathers and paint of a sachem."

Williams, angered by his attitude and his lofty mien, turned to him with smooth but stinging reply.

"My father has seen many winters; he is too old to remember the courtesy due one who has smoked. His ears are dull and he has not heard my name in his lodge. Perhaps if he had talked with the sagamores Canonicus and Miantonomo his eyesight would now be better.

"I am astonished," he went on, trying to force the other into revealing his name and position, "to find such a chief in company with these nameless dogs who break treaties and bring reproach upon the whole Indian people. They should be whipped out into the snow by squaws. My father must tell them to go away and set this young white man at liberty. This is an order from the Manitou, whose servant I am."

At this ultimatum the old Indian gave no sign of the least emotion; he remained aloof and immobile, as

though far above any such childish recriminations. Anger visibly stirred the others. The renegade, knife in hand, cursed viciously but softly.

Williams was aware that his slender hope lay in adding surprise to boldness. Abruptly he whipped out the knife which was his sole weapon. Leaning forward, he severed the thongs binding the arms of the unconscious prisoner.

Again swept up a storm of furious exclamations; for an instant he thought all four men would hurl themselves at him. None the less, he turned the limp figure over. The warmth of the lodge had melted the congealed blood. Taking up a mink pelt, with the fur he began to wipe the lad's face clean. Under cover of this action, he swiftly and furtively dipped a finger in the blood and dabbed at the boy's chest.

BUT now the old Indian broke into measured speech. At his gesture the Pequots sat back, though still fingering their weapons, while he launched a crafty reply at Williams.

"My brother speaks of this captive as though he were a man and a warrior. He is only a boy, a dog who serves the white men, and these warriors caught him like a dog; if they desire to kill him, that is their affair. Such dogs are slaves, better off dead.

"You tell us that you serve the Manitou. Your tongue seems to be forked, because you have said that the white men drove you from their town. Now let the Manitou give some sign to prove that my brother does indeed serve him. Let the Manitou do this, in order that we may believe and honor my brother, and obey his demands."

He relapsed into silence and again became an image of graven stone. The others, appreciating the dry mockery of his words, grunted eager assent. But Williams could only remain wordless, hopeless, dejected; he was in a trap from which he could not escape. The renegade suddenly spat forth bitter English speech at him

"You're done. Now you'll burn with him, you fool! Your ears and his join the others to keep my tally. I'd liefer crop a bloody preacher's ears than any else! You'd best get your Manitou to work or else the game's up. These redskins take their Manitou serious."

"Aye, more's the pity," Williams said sadly.

All of them were regarding him with fixed scrutiny. That demand for a sign from heaven had been mockery, yet made in earnest. To these red men nothing was impossible; the Manitou was everywhere, in everything, potent though invisible. They very well knew no such sign would be given, but if Williams had spoken the truth there was no reason why one should not be given.

Roger Williams tried to pray; his brain labored at it, his lips rebelled. He refused to accept the challenge. He could not. His faith was broken by his own misfortunes. An agonized prayer indeed lifted in his mind, but voice it he could not. To bring his beliefs down to the level of these brutes was impossible; to plump on his knees and cry to his Creator for a sign, because an Indian demanded it as the price of his life, struck him as ridiculous. It called for fanaticism, not for faith and reason.

Thus he struggled, until his head drooped and despair filled his eyes.

The redskins grunted significantly; he had had his chance and lost. The Pequots turned their attention to the unconscious lad—some starveling bond-servant, no better than a slave, caught about his chores on some outlying farm. Their voices lifted in savage eagerness and decision. Squamet should have his ears; then outside with him and trim a sapling to make a stake, and to work on him! The tall white man should take his turn in due time.

So it was settled. The renegade, knife out, darted forward, seized upon the limp figure and jerked it closer. A little burst of flames from the fire lighted his cruel bony features. Williams made instinctive protest—a sharp cry, a jerk, as though to interfere. He was too slow.

Squamet had seized one of the lad's bat-ears, his knife was poised for the quick stroke; but it remained quivering in air. For an instant the figure of the renegade poised in mid-blow, as though turned to stone by some terrific shock. A gasp escaped him. A wild and incoherent cry burst from his lips. The knife fell from his hand.

He leaned forward, his straining eyes distended upon the figure of the boy—then he leaped erect as though upon springs, his countenance so transfixed and contorted as to be past recognition. A babble of Indian speech poured from him

He was plunging ahead, desperately hoping to find some landmark. Pause he dare not, lest he sleep and die.

Williams seized the occasion. "The Manitou has given a sign!" he cried loudly at the Indians. "You asked for a sign, and it has been given!"

The renegade whirled upon him with a gasping cry in English.

"Aye, and God forgive me! Ye speak truer than ye know! 'Tis God's own hand at work—there can be no mistake, none!"

THE horror in his face made it seem that he had been struck mad. So, evidently, thought the Indians, who stirred uneasily. Madness was the one thing they feared and respected in any person, red or white, as the visible touch of the Manitou. Even the withered old Indian came half erect, staring and startled.

The wretched Squamet, however, was all too sane.

A frenzy grew upon him. He flung a roll of birchbark on the fire, so that it blazed up ruddily, and baring his chest pointed to the birthmark there. He gesticulated, poured torrential words at his companions, then caught the arm of the still senseless captive and half lifted the limp figure.

The tattered, bloody shirt had fallen away from the white throat and chest. In the firelight, a blood-red birthmark stood forth in plain sight above the heart—a mark like a curving arrow, almost identical with that over the heart of Robin o' Gants. The mark of the Manitou!

"My own son!" he cried out at Williams, letting the limp body fall. "D'ye understand? It can be no other! The child had the mark on him. He was left in England and now he's here, here! It's a token from heaven, I tell 'ee! There can be no killing of him. He's my own little lad, and these red devils must give over their intent—"

A complete change was evidenced in him, his own bloody purpose quite gone from his mind. The three warriors sprang to their feet, combating his impassioned speech with harsh and furious voices. The old Indian looked at the captive, then at Roger Williams, and sank back, pulling the bearskin about himself, as though washing his hands of the whole affair. He relaxed into immobility again, but his eyes darted warily about.

More and more furious grew the scene. The three Pequot warriors obviously refused to accept this amazing coincidence as any sign from the Manitou; they asserted their rights over the captive with stormy vehemence. Williams attempted to intervene; he was brushed aside. The renegade scooped up his fallen knife and stood astride the unconscious figure, defiance and fury mounting in the clash of words—

It reached sudden crisis when one of the three whipped out a tomahawk

and let drive a blow aimed to split the captive's skull. Robin intervened, kicking the redskin in the face and sending him asprawl. Like a flash, the other two were upon him in a ferocious outburst of savagery.

Williams stood appalled by this unleashed fury. The whirling, grappling figures rammed into him and knocked him sprawling; one of them laid hold on him and a knife stabbed at his throat. Desperately he struggled with the painted stinking redskin, fought him off somehow, by sheer good luck shoved his head into the fire-embers so that the Indian loosed him and went howling out of the lodge, clutching at his face.

The other two were rolling with Robin o' Gants, weapons at work in blind ferocity. One redskin leaped erect with a piercing yell, and fell dead across the body of the captive;

he had been stabbed to the heart. The remaining Indian was locked with the renegade in a death-grip of incredible fury.

To Williams the whole thing was unreal and horribly fantastic. The old Indian remained quite unperturbed in his bearskin; he leaned forward, kicked a stick or two into the embers, and the flickering light showed him apparently unmindful of the struggle.

This ended abruptly. The renegade rose above his antagonist and stabbed down, repeatedly and furiously, then staggered to his feet. He was streaming blood from a dozen wounds. Extending his crimsoned knife toward Williams, he gasped:

"Take him—take him away! Take care on him! Don't tell him—it was me. Tell him Robin o' Gants worked hard to save him—poor lad, poor lad!"





I've done what I could. The old sachem yonder—Canonicus himself—

His knees gave way and he pitched forward, but came to his elbow for a moment.

"Take care on him. I can no more," he said pitifully, and fell on his face.

Williams went swiftly to him; there was nothing to be done, he had died upon the very words. The only one to help now was the young captive. Williams tugged the dead Indian aside and lifted the lad's head—then looked up with sudden realization. The old sachem, Canonicus!

He met the sardonic, imperturbable gaze of the wrinkled Indian. Could this indeed be the great sachem of the Narragansets, the English-hating sagamore of mystery? Before Williams could speak, the old redskin threw aside his bearskin and rose, came forward, stood over the captive lad.

He leaned forward, spat on his hand, then rubbed it on the red arrow-mark visible on the white skin. The mark disappeared. Something like a grim smile struggled through the wrinkles of the sachem, as he met the startled gaze of Williams.

"My brother," he observed, "deserves all that is said of him. His tongue is straight. He serves the Manitou—and the Manitou serves him. This prisoner now belongs to him. He marked him with his finger; it was well done, quickly done."

Williams made no attempt to deny the action. It had been a forlorn hope; and only this old sachem, who had played so fantastic a part in the entire bloody drama, had detected it.

"Why," he asked, "did not my father tell me that he was Canonicus?"

"It is a name the English gave me; I do not like it," rejoined the old man.

"And I wanted to see if my brother were the sort of man he is said to be. I have seen. Now let my brother say what he desires of me."

Williams clutched at this offer.

"Freedom for this boy," he said. "For myself, a refuge beyond the reach of the white men, which I and my friends may buy from the Narraganset people; and liberty to preach the word of the Manitou among my red brethren."

Canonicus gazed at him for a moment, then almost smiled again.

"The friendship of the great sachem gives you all you desire," he said, "and you will bear witness that the sachem does not dishonor the belt of peace which he sent the English governor."

He lifted a turkey-bone whistle and blew shrilly upon it. Moccasined feet padded the snow. The lodge-flap was flung aside; into the opening crowded painted bronze figures. This wily old sachem, subtle as a snake, had not entrusted himself in this place alone.

Canonicus put the bearskin about him, stooped and picked up the stone pipe, and grunted orders at his warriors, pointing at the still senseless captive.

"Take the white dog with us; harm him not, but feed him and send him back to his people. Bury these who are dead. One of these Pequot dogs ran from here with a singed head; where is he?"

For reply, the nearest warrior touched a reeking scalp at his girdle.

"It is good." The sachem turned to Williams. "My brother will come with us. My nephew Miantonomo will be glad to see him."

FUGITIVE no more, still Williams hesitated; his head was whirling with the swift sequence of events he could scarcely as yet comprehend. His own action, which had precipitated this bloody scene, troubled him; yet his end had been well served, the lad was now safe.

He moved abruptly, went to the segment of tree-trunk, and opened it. From it he took the flag and opened it out.

"Aye," he murmured, "you speak of all he had and lost awhile, and redeemed again. And to think you came with the *Mayflower*, if he told truth! Perhaps you should go with me, to blow above the refuge I shall found for all tormented souls, all beliefs, all races—but no. Here is your place, as he would like it. So go with him, honest flag of honest folk; speak a word of pity and tolerance for him, and help him through the mists of the other world."

He spread out the flag over the body of Robin o' Gants. Then, following the sagamore Canonicus, Roger Williams passed out into the dawn and the destiny awaiting him.

THIS IS *Important*

Spotting airplanes from a California mountain-top, he caught sight of a puzzling thing—and started fast action.



THE two pursuit planes circled warily. Abruptly one went into a dive, arrowing earthward like a projectile.

Five miles to the southwest they were, Mr. Pringle figured as he hurried down the steps of the observation post, to reach the telephone in the room below. Even as he hastened, the second plane dived and vanished after the first, behind a range of hills.

Mr. Pringle reached the phone inside the hut. He whirled the crank, and picked up the receiver.

"Army flash! Sector aught-aught!"

The calm voice of the operator at the filter station of the Fighter Command told him to go ahead.

"Two!" Mr. Pringle said. "Unknown—"

In eight words, curt and concise, Mr. Pringle gave his report. Brief as it was, it furnished in a scant few seconds the data required by the Fighter Command. Mr. Pringle's flash was but one item in the running story of plane movements which the various observation posts would turn in to the filter station, enabling headquarters men to follow anything in the sky on their great maps.

Mr. Pringle's first excitement ebbed as he hung up the phone and jotted the data in the logbook. Those two planes he had spotted—they were not enemy ships, but our own fighters going through maneuvers. Nevertheless they *might* have been enemy ships. It was Mr. Pringle's duty as an observer of the civilian Aircraft Warning Service to report whatever he saw. For some day the planes *might* be hostile.

Mr. Pringle's partner on this shift, lanky Jim Ross, unfolded his awkward length from the bed in the hut.

"Well, it's eight o'clock. My turn on top."

Ross picked up the binoculars and stalked out. Mr. Pringle relaxed into the chair beside the desk. For an hour he was off duty.

Mr. Pringle looked about the hut. Even in his tiredness there was something of pride and satisfaction.

As is often true of quiet men of imagination, elderly little Joel Pringle was so sensitive to events that his emotions had an edge of melodrama. For him, the routine of this weekly six-hour shift of duty on this observation post on Fremont Peak was not dull, but an exciting, wearing experience. Though the reasoning part of him would say that it was impossible for the plane coming near to be an enemy craft, the emotional part of him would listen with racing heart for the throb of that motor to grow from a faint uneasy vibration to definite character. Then, when he finally spotted a plane, the moments while he studied it for identification signs, the scant seconds while he raced from the top deck of the post to the telephone in the room below, and waited for the filter station to respond, were moments of keen tension. Invariably as he gave his report his voice was unsteady with excitement; and when he hung up, it was with a sense of duty done. He took seriously the signs on the wall of the hut: "TAKE A NAP—AND HELP A JAP."

And the other: "THIS MAY BE THE MOST IMPORTANT JOB YOU EVER HAD."

Mr. Pringle's observation post was a shack on top of a knoll on top of lofty Fremont Peak. From the ramparted roof of the hut you could look over a vast stretch of California. At night you could see the lights of seventy-odd cities, great and small. *Seventy-odd cities! And all those people down there, asleep in their homes, or busy in the night-shifts of the great defense plants—they're dependent on you, Joe Pringle, counting on you, to keep your eyes open and your ears alert! This job is important!*

It was a little two-room shack, the observation post.

The main room was furnished with a desk above which hung a wall-telephone. You had to turn a crank, then lift the phone receiver, to get the operator. On the desk were the log for recording flashes, a manual to study for recognizing planes, a clock, binoculars, and a radio purely for enter-

tainment purposes. In the room was a wood-stove, an old bed and a battered leather armchair. On the walls hung those two mottoes, a couple of gas-masks, and rows of pictures of American fighting planes. There was an adjoining room, in which were two more beds and a clothes-rack holding sheepskin coats and slickers. For even in summer, at this altitude the night hours were penetratingly chill. In cold weather, of course, the snow lay hip deep, and the winds howled wolfishly over the peak with a fanged breath. . . . Outside, a stairway led to the observation deck on top of the hut, which was protected by a parapet a foot thick and chin high.

YOU were never idle when on duty. Though you might sit rigid in one spot, there was no let-up in the sense of urgency.

You had to keep watching the sky, for military planes flying high made startlingly little noise. A P-38, despite its two huge motors, would come floating across the heavens so fast that it seemed almost to be outracing its own motor roar; and if you weren't alert, a group of four interceptors would swish over at ten thousand feet before you sighted them at all. So you kept staring, turning from one horizon to the other. And especially you kept your ears alert; for usually you sensed a faint throb in the air, and you tensed and darted your glance around, seeing nothing—and then abruptly, surprisingly high and frighteningly close, you saw the P-38's, coming on fast, already almost overhead.

For an instant you delayed, lifting the binoculars to your eyes, swearing at your clumsiness in getting the flight into focus. Then you saw the familiar



The running man was staggering in his wild climb. As he lurched, Mr. Pringle called out: "Stop, or I'll shoot!"

by

George Armin Shaftel

twin tail booms of the ships—and you rushed to the phone, cranked it, and said "Army flash!" to the operator with the feeling when you hung up that your post was but one of many that chimed in vigilantly, just one vital nerve of a long ganglion reacting sensitively to the progress of every plane that moved across the sky.

Mr. Pringle's shift was from six P.M. until midnight.

After a hot afternoon he could taste of joy of a riotous sunset in the west, and feel dusk folding over the round of the earth and watch the stars begin to thrust through thinning day as the raucous activity of sunny hours faded into a deepening quiet. . . . Sometimes at night Army ships flew overhead to give the anti-aircraft crews practice at spotting planes. Then the searchlights would stab the dark sky.

And when this happened, Mr. Pringle sensed a very curious and exciting foreshortening of distance.

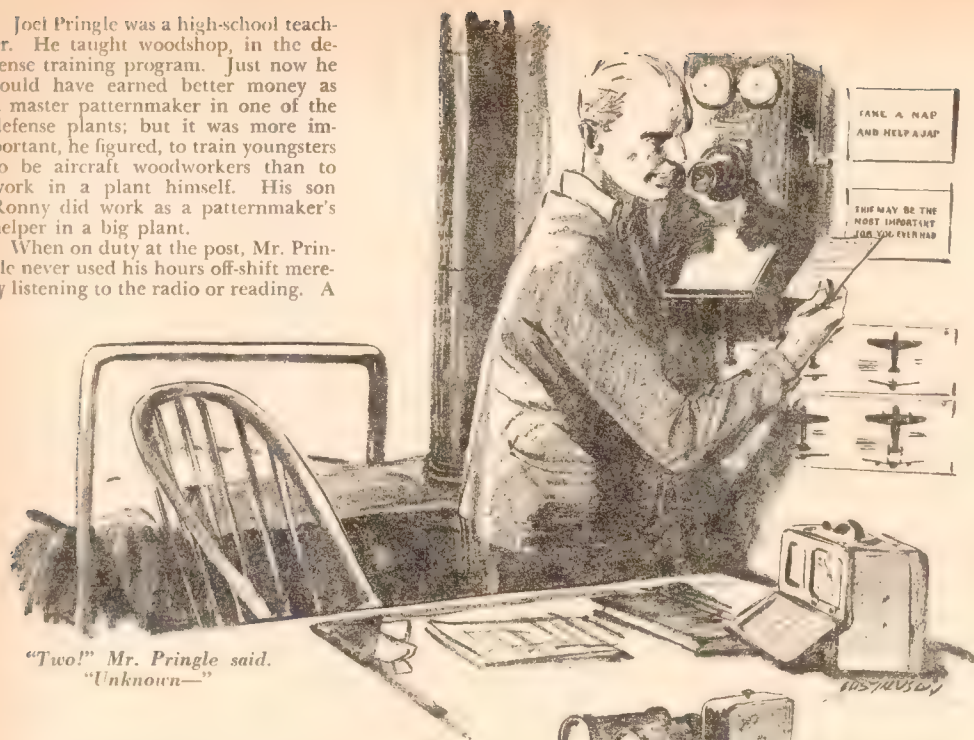
It seemed to him that the tremendous fingers of light were forty-fifty miles long. Searchlights that seemed located almost at the coast would turn their beams inland—and the light-lances would swing high over the peak! And sometimes a dozen beams would converge in a great pyramid to hold a plane at their apex. Staggeringly huge those beams were, measured by the ordinary spans of workaday existence! Colossal lances to pin a plane against the dark velvet of the night sky.

At first Mr. Pringle was alarmed by the foreshortening of distance which the view from the mountain presented. So very short it made seem the distance from salt water to mountain rampart! So very vulnerable if ever a hostile bomber came over! But one Sunday afternoon Mr. Pringle drove down to the beach—and it took him so long to pass through the myriad little towns, the orchards and truck-farms and trailer camps, so very reassuringly long, that the true distance came home to him, with profound relief. Why, the stretch from coast to mountain was the width of England itself! Then Mr. Pringle breathed a prayer—God grant that never would this land take the punishment that England had taken.

"It won't, if we do our job!"

Joel Pringle was a high-school teacher. He taught woodshop, in the defense training program. Just now he could have earned better money as a master patternmaker in one of the defense plants; but it was more important, he figured, to train youngsters to be aircraft woodworkers than to work in a plant himself. His son Ronny did work as a patternmaker's helper in a big plant.

When on duty at the post, Mr. Pringle never used his hours off-shift merely listening to the radio or reading. A



"Two!" Mr. Pringle said.
"Unknown—"

quiet man of imagination that soared beyond his humdrum job, Joel Pringle had an inventive turn of mind.

In the local post office he had seen posters which said that the Office of Scientific Research and Development, of Washington, D. C., wanted inventors' ideas. Mr. Pringle had ideas. Here on the post, while off-duty, he worked out his ideas on paper and wrote drafts of letters which he later painfully typed out and sent to Washington. Tonight he worked on an idea which seemed important to him:

Obviously guns of this war are developing toward constant fire, for destructive power, and automatic self-aiming, for accuracy and economy. Along that line I wish to submit an idea for anti-aircraft shells of expanding, multiple explosion, which I think of as "ripple bursts."

By that I mean a shell which explodes into a number of fragments, scattering them in a widening circle—whereupon each fragment, then, itself explodes! . . . An ordinary shell will damage a plane if it explodes within fifty feet of it, say. But a shell which explodes into fragments each of which then explodes again, will damage a plane if it comes within a hundred yards of it! For the circle of destruction widens out—

A yell from outside jarred Mr. Pringle from his absorption.

"Hey, Pringle! Come here, quick!"

Mr. Pringle put down his pencil and hurried outside. Jim Ross stood at the foot of the stairway to the observation deck, talking to a stranger.

"Pringle, this chap says somebody's flashing signals, down the slope a ways!"

"Flashing signals!" Mr. Pringle repeated blankly.

"Yes, s-sir! With a flashlight!" The stranger was a youngster about Ronny's age. He stuttered with excitement. "Me and my buddy parked, and we was walkin' along the road by the turnout where the trees are, when we heard somebody talkin'—and then we heard a man movin' down the mountain, and then we saw the flashes. Long and short ones. Come over here and look. There!" The youngster walked down the slope and pointed. "See 'em?"

MR. PRINGLE followed the lad, motioning for Jim Ross to stay at the post. And Mr. Pringle, looking down the slope, saw a flashlight beam winking in short dots, then prolonged in dashes.

Mr. Pringle's nerves screwed tight with excitement. There was no doubt of it. Somebody was flashing signals in code.

It was the duty of observers of the Aircraft Warning Service not merely

to watch for planes but for forest fires, and to report any unusual activity within range of their binoculars.

Mr. Pringle told the young man: "Go back to the post. Tell Mr. Ross to phone the Sheriff's sub-station to radio for one of their patrol cars to look into this. Run, lad!"

The boy turned back toward the observation post. Mr. Pringle hesitated a moment; he was small, middle-aged, without a weapon. Resolutely, then, he started down the slope toward that winking flashlight.

The moon was a brass sickle low in the east, giving little light; but the myriad lights of towns and cities on the plain a mile below was like an inverted sky crowded with yellow stars, and the glare breathed an amazing amount of soft light all the way up here. Once or twice Mr. Pringle was able to see a man working down the slope below him, toward a loop of the highway switchbacking down the mountain. There was no trail, and Mr. Pringle had to shoulder through chaparral, clinging to the tough branches to keep from falling down the steep slope. Stopping to listen, he could hear the man below.

Once the man stopped; and his flashlight spoke its staccato language for a brief interval. Mr. Pringle cautiously gained on the man.

Abruptly Mr. Pringle heard the roar of a motor. At first he thought it was an airplane, summoned by the signals—

"But it's the deputy-sheriffs' patrol car!"

They'd rush past! If he could reach the road in time, he could stop the car and get the deputies to help him catch—

He listened, astounded. That man scrambling through the brush below him was singing!

"Jesus loves me, that I know-w-w—"

The man was singing hymns!

THE men in the patrol-car must have heard it too. From the roadway a powerful auto spotlight flashed a beam up the slope, and caught the singer full in its glare. A tall, brawny man in a white sport-shirt, the singer stood rooted in his tracks a moment, mouth open but words halted in his throat.

Abruptly he turned full around and started running back up the slope—straight toward Mr. Pringle.

From the patrol car a gun roared out and laid a streak of fire through the darkness, and a deputy yelled: "Halt!" The man did not halt, but scrambled frantically on up the brushy slope. The spotlight moved, to keep the man in its glare; and like a whip, it drove him to panicky effort.

Mr. Pringle, waiting, felt panic too. The man was coming right toward him. If the deputies shot again, bullets would come this way, as well. *Better lie down, better get out of the way—*

The running man was gasping loudly for breath and staggering in his wild uphill climb. Almost at Mr. Pringle's feet, he stumbled and then pawled. And as he lurched to his feet, Mr. Pringle called out harshly: "Stop, or I'll shoot!"

The man lifted his arms, and swayed where he stood; he was almost sobbing for breath.

"I haven't done anything!" he stammered out.

"You're under arrest," Mr. Pringle said sternly; and afraid the man might see that he really had no gun, Mr. Pringle shouted: "Come on, Deputy! I've got 'im."

"You can't arrest me," the man said defiantly. "I know my rights."

Mr. Pringle then caught the odor of whisky on the man's gasping breath; and the implications of it sent wild relief through Mr. Pringle. Just a drunk; not an enemy agent!

The two deputy-sheriffs were running up the slope. They arrived and seized the culprit.

"What's the idea?" Deputy Cargyle rasped at the man. "Flashing signals to somebody?"

"Prove it!" the man retorted. "It aint no crime to turn on a flashlight."

"This is war-time, and this is a military area. You're going to answer a lot of questions, Mister."

Deputy Wynant laid his big hand on Mr. Pringle's arm a moment.

"Good job, Mr. Pringle."

"Oh, the man's just a drunk, Deputy."

"Maybe, maybe not."

The officers departed with their prisoner; and Mr. Pringle returned to the observation post, very thoughtful of mood. . . .

An hour later, the Chief Observer called Mr. Pringle on the post telephone.

"Good work, Joell!"

"Oh, it wasn't anything important," Mr. Pringle said diffidently. "That signaler was just a drunk."

"Listen," the Chief Observer retorted, "literally millions of people depend on the vigilance of our observers. Whatever we do for their safety is *damned* important!"

Mr. Pringle was very preoccupied the next few days.

While he worked about the shop, teaching youngsters how to turn wood in a lathe and how to use planer and sander and bandsaw, always at the back of his mind was that worry: Suppose the man who had been flashing signals from the mountain was not a drunk? And if not, exactly what was the man up to?

It even spoiled his sleep, this brooding. Getting stern with himself, Mr. Pringle deliberately tried to turn his thoughts. He had another idea for a war invention—

Take this new short-wave radio beam the newspapers were excited about, the klystron. In fog or in darkness you could aim this beam into the sky, and if it hit a plane, it would bounce right back to your apparatus, and you could tell exactly where that plane was and how high. Suppose you hitched the klystron beam to one of the new anti-aircraft guns that would shoot high eight miles into the air? Suppose you connected not just one klystron but a battery of them—say a circle of five beams, to the gun. . . . Say you located a plane in the air, then, and started shooting. The plane would dodge out of one beam, of course. But turning to the right, it would come into another of the five beams—and that would automatically switch the whole battery to the right, gun included—keeping the gun still on target! The plane might dodge back to the left then—but be caught on the beam to the left, which would swing the gun leftward! Keeping the cannon right on target until the shells blasted the plane out of the sky!

But even this excited thinking could not ease the ache of worry at the back of his mind. . . . Thursday's newspapers had a story about the flashlight signaler on the

mountain. After investigating the man for three days, the local officers were releasing him!

"That proves it," Mr. Pringle admonished himself. "They are satisfied that he was just a drunk. So forget it!"

But when Mr. Pringle went to bed that night, another possibility concerning the signaler jarred into his mind: Suppose the man had *not* been drunk? Suppose the drunkenness had been just an act! Suppose the man had flashed dot-dash beams from his light, and shouted hymns at the top of his voice, just to "cover up" something? To divert attention from—

"From *what*?" Mr. Pringle asked himself.

That he could not answer. But the idea stuck. After all, what possible motive could the man have had for flashing signals from Fremont Peak, if he was flashing signals? To guide a plane to the peak? But there was nothing on the mountain worth wasting a bomb upon! Which led to another thought: Maybe the man was not trying to guide anybody to the peak. Maybe he was—transmitting information?

An enemy agent had a big problem in getting information out of a country to his superiors abroad. True enough. But, heavens, to think of transmitting information across an ocean by winking a flashlight on a mountain top was utterly silly. Fantastic!

"That's just the point," Mr. Pringle told himself then. "The man with the flashlight—he wasn't transmitting. Oh, no. *But maybe he had a partner who was transmitting facts out to sea!*"

"So maybe the man with the flashlight was just diverting attention from his partner, who was busy. Maybe some people who'd parked on the mountain road for the view were almost stumbling on the enemy agent and his apparatus, so the man with the flashlight pulled a trick to draw attention away from his partner!"

COMMON sense then dashed cold water upon this inspiration.

How could an enemy agent have been transmitting information from the peak?

By short-wave radio? But the Government had monitor stations listening for such broadcasts. The Government was catching anybody who attempted it. Tracing them by direction-finders! Besides, it wouldn't be necessary for enemy agents to go on top of a mountain to transmit by radio. They'd be smarter to work from a moving car.

And then Mr. Pringle had a very shrewd hunch.

"Black light! By golly, *that's* what they're maybe using!"

An infra-red flash would be invisible to the naked eye. Suppose the signaler and a partner had "black light" apparatus in a car. Suppose they drove up to the peak and parked—as so many people did; there was no hindrance to anybody's going and coming on the peak road—then flashed signals in invisible light out to sea. *And out to sea, maybe, there's a submarine cruising, with a movie camera on deck, a camera with telescopic lenses and film sensitive to infra-red light, a camera that's focused on Fremont Peak! The mountain is on every map, so there'd be no trouble focusing on it. Maybe the enemy agents flash dot-dash code in "black light" for hours, sending out reams of information that's picked up on movie film by the sub officers, who decode it and radio it clear across the ocean! Maybe that's what's happening. Right under our noses! Without any of us even suspecting!*

AS Mr. Pringle drove up to the post on Fremont Peak the next Sunday afternoon, he noticed how many cars were on the road. It was a popular drive for sightseers. A radio car from the Sheriff's sub-station patrolled the road but interfered with nobody, unless ordinary highway rules were being violated. At night dozens of cars were parked in the various lookout points.

Mr. Pringle's partner, Ross, was on duty on the observation deck the first two hours of their shift; and Mr. Pringle climbed up on top at eight, as dusk deepened—and far below, on the plain a mile below, the lights of the towns and cities came on.

With a worried fascination Mr. Pringle watched the brilliant panorama growing increasingly vivid with gathering darkness. The long strings of shining golden beads outlined the main highways; and the scuttling streaks of auto headlights indicated where traffic was heaviest. Tall masts with red lights indicated several air fields, and radio masts. Floodlights made brilliant the yards of humming defense plants and railroad sidings. Winking red and green lights indicated important intersections. Thick-massed lights, like shining grapes, betrayed the thick-massed buildings of metropolitan areas. So vulnerable did those towns look, all lit up for predatory eyes!

At ten o'clock, Jim Ross relieved Mr. Pringle.

"I'm going to take a walk, Jim," Mr. Pringle said.

And leaving the observation post, he trudged along the highway where it skirted the rim of Fremont Peak. Up here were wooded picnic grounds and a Boy Scout lodge; and bulging off the highway were the lookout points. Tonight, as on most Sunday

nights, the cars parked in the lookout areas were numerous.

Mr. Pringle began to feel a little foolish. These were just ordinary sightseers and young folks parked along here. He scuffed his feet and whistled softly, and occasionally coughed as he walked along. Each time a young couple separated rather hastily on hearing him approach, he felt embarrassed and apologetic. He didn't mind youngsters courting.

He walked down the road about a mile. Cars left the peak; new cars arrived to park in the turnouts. About none of them did he notice anything suspicious. He began to feel a little foolish. He turned back, finally. A yellow glow in the east was forewarning of the rising moon. He trudged back to the post, but did not turn in; he continued on up the roadway, toward the wooded picnic grounds set up by the County Recreation Department, at the end of the highway. He passed a car, two couples in it talking idly, cigarettes glowing. He moved on and was about to turn back when he saw another car almost hidden by shrubbery on the picnic ground.

He continued toward it. Coming near, he saw that a couple sat in the front seat. They sat apart, as if they had been talking.

Abruptly the man leaned toward the girl, and she moved into his arms.

Mr. Pringle turned away—and hesitated, his pulse suddenly racing. . . . Odd! Usually, as he walked past a car, the fellow would remove his arm from the back of the seat, and the two people would move apart. Not this time. When this couple had noticed him, then they moved together. Yes, after they'd noticed him!

Mr. Pringle turned and approached the car.

His mouth felt parched and his throat tight, but resolutely he girded himself for what he must do.

"Sorry," he said apologetically to the couple as he neared them, "but you're parked on Government property, and I must ask you to come up to the post and be identified. It's a nuisance, I know, but it's routine orders."

The man and the girl moved apart as he spoke; the man looked at him, but the girl kept her face averted. The man nodded.

"Certainly, sir," he said pleasantly. "Come on, Anna."

The man opened the car door.

Afterward, Mr. Pringle could not recall whether he actually saw a movement in the dark back of the sedan, or somehow merely sensed it. At any rate, he turned and flashed his flashlight into the back seat. A man crouched there. On the seat was a bulky box, apparatus of some kind.

Mr. Pringle, his voice unsteady, asked: "What've you got there?"

The man in the back called out something, urgently.

Mr. Pringle jerked his head around to look at the driver—as the latter moved. The man's fist struck glancingly at Mr. Pringle's jaw, and Mr. Pringle staggered. He started to shout to Jim Ross at the post, but the man in the back seat of the car had a gun, and the report was a pall of sound that blotted out the universe; then Mr. Pringle was falling, falling—

THE heavy sedan lurched into motion, engine roaring. Out of the picnic grounds, down the switchbacking mountain road the car started.

Jim Ross, on the observation deck of the Aircraft Warning post, had heard the yell and shot. Now he saw the car start racing down the road. Jim hurried down the steps, jumped to the phone inside the shack. He had noticed the deputy-sheriffs' patrol car pass a few minutes before. The car often stopped at the Ranger station at Chinquapin Flat, a mile distant. Jim called the Ranger station. Hastily he explained to the Ranger.

"No, the deputies aren't here—Hey, wait!" the Forestry man blurted. "A car's turning in right now!"

He ran outside as the patrol car stopped and the big deputies stepped out, stretching cramped muscles. But even as the Ranger started yelling to them, a heavy sedan flashed past, motor roaring, and careened around the next curve. Deputy Cargyle swore and slid back of the wheel of the patrol car.

"They're gettin' away! They shot somebody up at the peak—"

Rubber screamed as the patrol car twisted back onto the highway and accelerated in pursuit of the speeding sedan.

The driver of the sedan noticed the lights of the sheriffs' car in his rear-view mirror. He leaned farther forward over the steering-wheel, pushed harder on the gas. The road was a superfine mountain highway, wide, and carefully banked at the many curves. But it hadn't been planned for speeds like this.

Tires screeched as the driver braked hard to swing the careening sedan around turns. Behind, the sheriffs' car gained steadily; Deputy Cargyle was instinct-familiar with the grades and bends. In desperation the fugitive driver increased his sedan's speed—and came to a sharp turn the car could not take. With a grinding crash the sedan skidded into the metal road-guard, caromed off in a wild plunge that sent it clear across the road and against the inner wall so hard that it jounced back and careened over onto its side and slid for a dozen lengths, stopping at the very edge of the drop-off.

Dazedly the two men and the woman clambered out—into the glare of the patrol-car headlights, and the threat of leveled pistols in the deputies' hands.

"You're under arrest!"

Even then the driver tried to slide down the steep slope into the brush below. But Deputy Cargyle's gun spoke, and the driver's leg crumpled under him and he fell headlong.

"You've got us," the other man prisoner said.

And Cargyle, sliding down the slope, reached the hurt man and slipped handcuffs over his wrist.

Mr. Pringle's son Ronny hurried to the hospital when the Chief Ob-

Mr. Pringle asked: "What've you got there?" But the man in the back seat had a gun.

server of Mr. Pringle's post phoned the news.

"How's Dad?" Ronny blurted when he met Mr. Tabor, the C.O., in the hospital waiting-room.

"He's in the surgery, Ronny. Dr. Maibaum is operating to remove the bullet. We'll just have to wait for news."

Ronny gulped. He looked like Mr. Pringle, but was taller.

"How b-bad did it look, Mr. Tabor?"

"He was conscious when brought in, Ronny. It's serious but not fatal. He's weak, but—kind of excited and—pleased. Insisted on telling me that those prisoners had been transmitting information to the enemy by signaling from the mountain with flashes of 'black light.'" Mr. Tabor chuckled, and repeated amusedly: "Black light!"

"Well, weren't they?" Ronny demanded. Ronny had a lot of faith in his father.

"No." Mr. Tabor's chubby face became very serious. "At least, not yet they haven't used 'black light.' But what those two enemy agents were doing was just about as bad. They had a panoramic camera set up, and were taking a long time-exposure of the terrain below the mountain. You know from up where they were, you can see the lights of some seventy-odd cities."

RONNY uttered a low whistle of dismay.

"Golly, the lights must outline every highway and business center, every defense plant and railroad siding—"

"Yeah. Those fellows would've taken a photo map of the district that would be as good, maybe better, than the enemy could take if they actually sent reconnaissance planes over the

country! You see how serious that could be?"

Ronny nodded. "The enemy would know just how to hurt us most." Then he brightened. "But Dad prevented it, didn't he?"

"He sure did, Ronny! We're proud of him," Mr. Tabor agreed.

Sometime later, a nurse came to the waiting-room.



*Illustrated by
L. R. Gustavson*

"You can see Mr. Pringle now. But Dr. Maibaum said you must stay just a minute or two. Mr. Pringle is not strong."

They walked into Mr. Pringle's room. He grinned leebly at his son as Ronny bent over the bed.

"How're you feeling, Dad?"

"Fine, Ronny, fine! Glad you're here, Mr. Tabor. I've thought of something I want you to write out for me—"

"Sure, but you take it easy now, Pringle. You lie quiet."

"Of course, but first let me tell you this idea—"

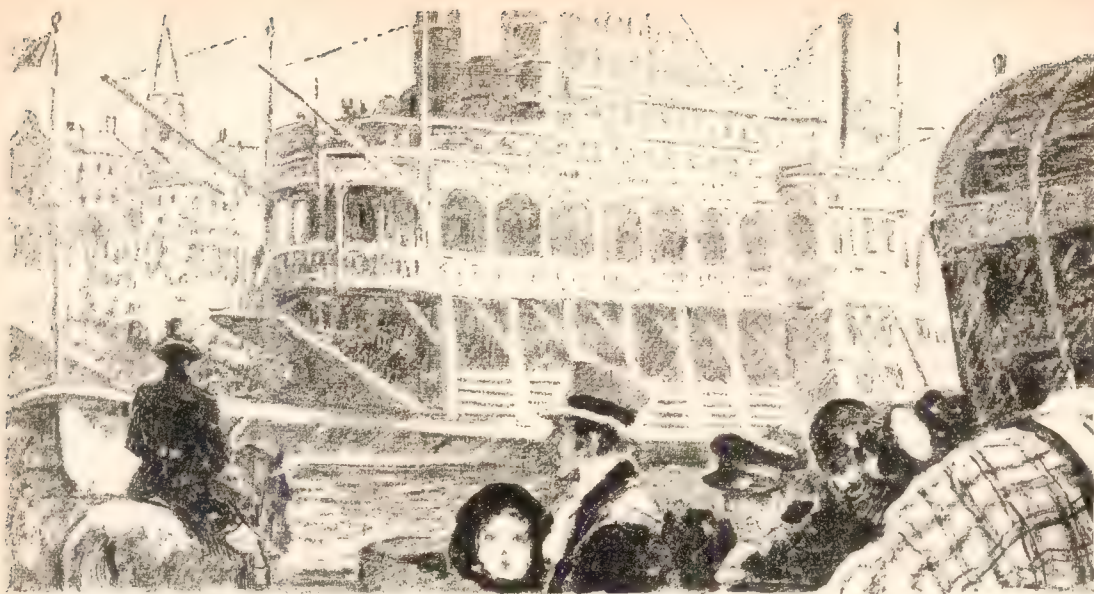
"Mr. Pringle!" the nurse cut in crisply, her face stern. "You are not to talk."

"I will talk! I've got to talk, so please—"

"But it's a matter of life and death for you to rest."

"This is important!" Mr. Pringle practically shouted at her. "Listen, Tabor. This is an idea for a self-aiming torpedo. Send it to Washington. Here's what I mean—a listening device, hitched to a mechanical pilot, built right in the torpedo itself! You see the possibilities, Tabor? You do, Ronny! Set the listening device to the noise and pitch of the propellers of the ship that the submarine wants to sink. Then the automatic piloting device will make your torpedo follow its target like a retriever dog! When the ship zigs, the torpedo will zig; and when the ship zags, the torpedo will follow suit, zigging and zagging, until she strikes! You see it? Now, in detail—"

Mr. Tabor nodded. Ronny's eyes were bright. Gravely they listened.



The Story Thus Far:

YOUNG Denis Abernathy had come out of the West, summoned to Perth Amboy by a letter from his grandfather, old Simon. He found the aged man fearful and suspicious, hinting of evil influences at work in the long-established freighting firm of Moreau, Descoings & Abernathy—hints well founded, it proved; for shortly after Denis' arrival, the old man was found strangled in his room, in the home of affable Evans Dacre—employed as manager by old Henri Descoings and his arrogant son Louis, who (with the non-resident Moreau) now comprised the firm and who were not disposed to allow Denis' claims as an heir.

From other sources Denis had confirmation of the strange state of affairs in the transportation company; from lovely Lois Moreau and her young cousin Gerard Monselet, up from New Orleans to find out what had become of their usual dividends from the firm; from old Simon's lawyer Counselor Thistlewate; from an apparently chance acquaintance—the horse surgeon Kipper.

The young man, after some investigations, left town for an unannounced destination. In Philadelphia he heard of one Garvey Pursell, who was starting a new teaming business—backed, possibly, by the Descoings. Resuming his journey, Denis found himself in the wake of Pursell and Louis Descoings who seemed to be following the road taken by young Monselet and Lois Moreau, journeying westward to meet Lois' father. Also, to Denis' surprise, he came upon Kip-

per. Kipper, volunteering no explanation of his own presence, warned Denis against danger in this lonely stretch of road. Cryptically he added: "Trust no one you're not sure of." And the warning seemed justified, for at one tavern Denis was awakened by an attempt to enter his room. He spoke and the intruder fled.

The next night he overtook Monselet and Lois, stranded at the Ox Bow by an accident to their carriage; when he heard Louis Descoings trying to intimidate Lois, Denis worsted the bully in a fist-fight, and thereafter traveled with the two young Southerners. At the Swingletree, Denis left on an undisclosed errand, telling them to await his return. But when Dacre appeared and, hearing a messenger tell Lois her father was at a place called Flangler's Mills, departed hurriedly, Lois—disregarding Monselet's protests—set out by herself to meet her father.

After a day-long ride she found the remote place she sought; but just as she discerned her father and Denis Abernathy inside a lighted room, a figure rose in the darkness near her, and she heard the crack of a pistol. . . . Hours later Lois opened her eyes to sunlight, and heard a woman say: "Now, dearie, you must be rested."

(The story continues in detail:)

Hauling

LOIS lifted herself on an elbow and looked around; it was a neat, comfortable place; there were woven rag rugs on the plank floor, and pictures on the walls; and the log fire which she seemed to have seen in a dream was burning as cheerfully as ever.

"Is this Flangler's Mills?" she asked.

"Indeed it is, dearie. The very place where you came last night, and were so frightened. I'm Mrs. Seeley; my husband has the timber-cutting here."

"Then I *did* see my father?"

"You did. But you were dazed, and not yourself—though you did speak to him. And to Denis Abernathy too."

Lois closed her eyes and lay back upon her pillow once more.

"But you were too worn out to say much to them. And no wonder," said Mrs. Seeley. "To come through that dark woods at that hour of the night! The boy Joddy who guided you here says you were all alone and lost when you knocked at his mother's door."

Lois started up once more.

"Joddy! Where is he?"

"Oh, he went off home hours ago. But not until he'd seen you safe here in this room, and with me beside you. He's queer," said Mrs. Seeley, shaking her head, "but there's not a more faithful creature in these cuttings than Joddy."



West

A novel of wagon-freighting days
by John T. McIntyre

There were tears in Lois's eyes as she thought of the boy; of his love for the trees which were being treated so cruelly; of his gratitude to the dumb beasts who were kind to him when people were not.

Mrs. Seeley gave her some warmed brandy, and then some thin porridge with milk. Afterward she permitted Lois to get up, helped her dress, and fixed her comfortably in a chair by the fire with a rug across her knees. Lois loosened her hair, and combed it with a horn comb while she talked with Mrs. Seeley.

"We've been here for twenty years," said the old woman. "Except for a visit to Pittsburgh once a year, I've been at the mills all that time. Seeley cuts lumber for rafts and for building; he has great stores of logs seasoning; but most of them he floats down the creek, and then by way of the river to town. There's always been great call for timber for flat-boats and rafts, but now there's a good bit of talk about steamers."

"Is that the business my father came on?" asked Lois.

"Yes; he came two or three days ago with Mr. Foster and Captain Shreve. The Captain commands a steamboat that carries freight down to New Orleans. Your father came upriver with him on the boat's last trip."

"But Denis Abernathy?" said Lois. "Yes, he's still here, dearie," said Mrs. Seeley. "He came on the same business as the others, I dare say, for he was the center of a good deal of the talk. All about roads, the teams, the merchandise, the trails through the woods, and the furs brought along them to the town. They talked about the great country they were to open beyond the Ohio; the mines, the farms, the thousands of people who were to cross the mountains and settle."

All this was part of the thought Lois knew to be so deeply fixed in Denis Abernathy's mind, and she felt a warm glow at her heart as she heard it put into the words of another person. She had hoped, while listening to him talk on those last few days on the road, that what he was turning so earnestly in his mind might in some way be connected with her father's new interest in the river. And now here it was! Apparently a fact! And as she considered it, thoughts began to build up in her mind, one upon another. The house of Moreau would lift its head once more. It would carry itself among the traders and shipmen with the fine pride of years before; not only would its brigs and schooners stow their burdens of freight for the Gulf ports, and to and from the is-

lands of the Caribbean, but also its steamers would breast the current of the great river on their way north; and returning, they would carry rich products to the great market of the south. In this trade she saw the white hands of the Moreaus touch new and fabulous things, but a new hand would appear among them. A new, strong hand, not white, but burned by the sun and wind of the open country, and hardened by work. There would be new blood in the old firm; red blood—red and resolute yet withal, gentle and wise.

A TAP came at the door. It was Lois's father; a tall, handsome man of less than sixty; slim, with hair once a lustrous black, but now graying.

"Lois! My dear child!" he said as he gathered her in his arms.

"I'm quite all right now," she said as she kissed his cheek. "There's no need to be upset."

He put her back in the chair. "Last night," he said, "I was shocked when we found you outside there in the darkness and cold. You were scarcely able to stand, and you were incoherent when you tried to tell about yourself."

"I was tired and frightened. But I am over all that now," she assured him.

He looked at her, shaking his head. "No girl but you, Lois, would ever have undertaken such a thing. The long, lonely road! And then to venture into the forest after nightfall! That half-witted boy told us he had guided you here."

Lois said nothing in reply to this. She wanted to hear what he had to tell her of the shooting of the night before, and waited for him to mention it. But he talked of the dangers of her adventure. Of Gerard Monselet—and why had he not insisted that she remain at the inn where they had been left, safe and comfortable? And if he'd not been able to persuade her, why had he not set out with her?

SHE told him Monselet had not known what she intended to do, and that she'd felt someone should be at the inn to meet Denis when he returned.

"I had no idea Mr. Abernathy had word from you and intended to meet you here," she said.

"He had no word from me. And I do not see how he could have known I was here," said her father. "I was surprised when he arrived and told me who he was, and that he'd been traveling with you for some days. His name had been often mentioned in the conferences we'd been holding, and I thought he'd come to take part in them. But it seems this was not so. He told me himself that while he'd been working with the new project for a long time, he'd no idea it had got as far as conferences about materials."

François Moreau talked about everything else, but it was not until he arose that he mentioned the shooting. He bent over his daughter and kissed her on the cheek. And he smoothed back her hair as he said:

"I must ask you, Lois, to have no more of these secret enterprises. This is no region where a girl may take risks. To think of that affair last night, and with you in the midst of it! Pistol-shots in the darkness!" He paused, looking at her intently. "That boy who guided you said someone was about to fire at Abernathy and myself as we stood by the window. And that another person, also invisible, fired at him. But of course, in a moment of excitement, a boy like that might imagine almost anything."

"It was not imagination, Father," said Lois. "I stood beside Joddy at that moment, and I saw the same thing."

Moreau looked at her attentively for a moment, and then he said:

"Young Abernathy has spoken to me of certain occurrences which he attributes to the Descoings. I have had these people acutely in my mind for some years. I have tried to think of them as being honest and fair-deal-

ing. But after what I've been told, I now feel they are infamous rogues who have been cheating and deluding us for years. And what they have done to us, they have also done to the Abernathys. Though,"—in a tone of horror,— "in their case there has been murder! God send, Lois, nothing like that may happen to us."

She looked up into his face; he was a man unaccustomed to violence, and suspicion was a thing not often in his mind. But there was a clogging fear about her heart. That he had all but died as he stood at the window the night before, she felt sure; and by the same treacherous hand that had killed Simon Abernathy.

Before he left the room, Moreau asked if Denis might see her. The young man, it seemed, had made that request.

"He told me to add," said her father, "you were not to think of it if you were not recovered and felt strong enough."

She smiled at this.

"Tell him," she said, "I have quite recovered, and that I feel enormously strong."

DENIS came into the room a few minutes later.

"I've been wanting to speak to you," he said, "but old Mrs. Seeley wouldn't listen to it. From the way she put it, I'd got to thinking your prospects were not promising."

Lois laughed.

"Far from it," she said. "But I was bewildered at first, and nervous. It was just as well that she kept me quiet."

Denis looked big and bronzed and strong as he sat with her beside the fire; and Lois smiled as she looked at him; he seemed quite boylike and awkward.

"Last night," he told her, "as soon as I had a fairly clear idea of how things stood, I sent word to Monselet. I said you were here, and that it would be as well, if he could get a horse, to harness it to the cart and come along also."

"Oh, I'm glad you did that," said Lois. "Poor Gerard! He must have been worried when I didn't return."

"Coming here as you did was dangerous business," said Denis. "I've

been going up and down this road for a long time—especially this end of it—and I've seen some ugly happenings. Looking back over them, I'd say this way over the mountains is not too safe even for an armed man."

She smiled at him.

"You didn't hesitate the other night when you started off. If you did, I wasn't told about it."

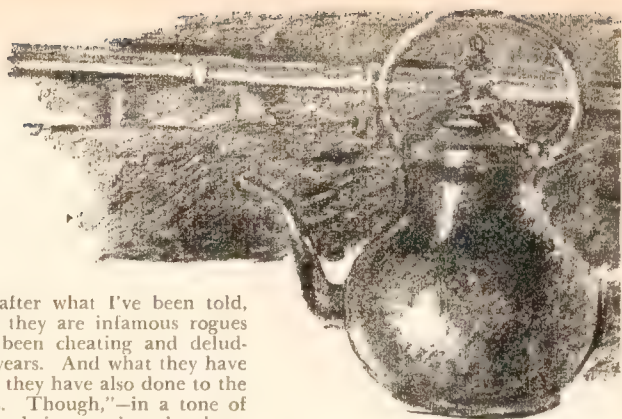
He seemed about to say something, but checked himself.

"I was called away suddenly," he said, "on a business I had to attend to at once."

She sat silent, looking at him inquiringly. She did not really expect him to go any further into the matter, but she gave him a chance to do so. He looked at the fire; he joined his strong brown hands together; and there was a frown upon his face. And when he spoke, he showed he'd put the purpose of that day's journey aside.

"Foster is here," he told her. "And Captain Shreve. Both are interested in the river. Some of the things I've thought so much about have already taken shape. Your father being here on the same errand was the greatest surprise of all. Foster is a merchant well known in Pittsburgh. His trading business is the biggest in this section of the West. And he has the confidence of people who must see and know the country, if we're ever to make anything of it. It takes money to open roads, to build a dozen or two steamboats, and maybe a few hundred wagons. The horses for that many wagons," said Denis, "the right kind of horses, I mean, would run into a fortune."

"I'd often sit for hours, wondering how the money side of the matter could be arranged. As I looked at it, it seemed as if it never could be done. For even after all the expenses at the headwaters had been met, there would be so many others along a thousand or more miles of river. There were the woodcutters. The yards on the





"Coming here as you did was dangerous business," said Denis. Lois smiled. "You didn't hesitate the other night when you started off!"

river-banks with great stacks of furnace-wood to load into the steamers as they'd stop on their way up- or down-stream. And then the teams to draw the cut wood from the timber sections, sometimes miles away and over bad roads; very often no roads at all. And on the lower river there are often long stretches of country not wooded at all. We'd have to raft the furnace-wood down to these.

"As I thought of these things," said Denis, "they built up into figures that troubled me a good bit. But since

I've talked with Mr. Holt, who is here, the thing has taken on a different look. Money, as he pointed out, is the easiest thing in the world to get, if you can show a reasonable promise of profit. And your father," said the young man, smiling at Lois, "seems to have the same view of it."

"When you speak of these things," said Lois, "I see a whole region stirred into new life. Great things will happen where almost nothing ever happened before. But afterward," she said, "when the procession of your

words has stopped passing through my mind, the only thing I can see is that this whole Western country is still a wilderness. There are few people. There may be great natural riches here; but work is needed, and people to do the work."

Denis looked at her gravely.

"What you say is true," he said. "But something has happened in the years since the border war ended. Forts and blockhouses are now strung through what used to be hostile country. Millions of acres of good land are open and safe for settlement. An awakening is really going on. People who have worked small stony farms like those to be seen in these hills, are looking beyond the Ohio. Others of the same class, in New England, whose fathers have toiled for two hundred years winning scanty crops out of a meager soil, are seeing the truth at last. Thousands of them are already on the move; we are actually at the beginning of a great migration. Whole populations will put the sea behind them, and face the forests, the hills, and plains. It is the beginning of a new time for America."

As Lois watched him while he spoke, she again saw a thing in him that she'd seen once or twice in the last

week. There was a light of hope, of faith, in his eyes; and in his strong face there was the stamp of something like prophecy.

LOIS slept during the afternoon; in the evening Mrs. Seeley, who finally admitted the girl had recovered from the shock of the previous night, permitted her to go into the big room—the room where Lois had seen her father and Denis stand at the window when the hand holding the pistol had lifted out of the darkness against their lives. There was a long table covered with a white cloth and set with heavy crockery, and here and there a piece of silver which told of a place nearer to civilization and a milder kind of life.

Her father, newly barbered and brushed, and looking fresh and handsome, introduced the other men: Mr. Holt, a small man who looked much like a cherub in spite of his white hair—a banker who represented moneyed people who had shown a deal of interest in the transportation matter; Mr. Seeley, a tough, square-built man who carried on the timber cutting; Mr. Thornbury, a Philadelphia merchant and shipowner.

"This is Mr. Foster, who is well known, not only in this region, but on down the river," said Lois' father, presenting a stout, florid-looking man. "He has done a good deal of business with New Orleans in timber, fur, iron and hides. Also here is Captain Shreve, who is well known to the house of Moreau—the commander of the *Enterprise* steamer, my dear."

"Oh, yes, Captain," said Lois, as she shook hands with a hard-fisted, determined little man in dusty boots and a pilot's coat. "You are in the school-books at New Orleans. They tell how you came down the river with your steamboat full of gunpowder, cannon, rifles and such things. And how glad General Jackson was to see you."

Captain Shreve rubbed his chin, and grinned, very well pleased.

"The General needed that cargo," said he. "He'd recruited a sight of men, but hadn't enough shootin'-irons to give them. His casks of powder were mighty few, too, and he hadn't had time to collect any more. When the black boys on the levee began rolling those seventy barrels down the planks from the *Enterprise*, it made the officers who'd come down to receive the cargo feel mighty comfortable."

"It must have been a wonderful moment for you, Captain," said Lois.

"I won't deny it was nice," said the skipper of the *Enterprise*. "But you know, Miss Moreau, only a part of the credit for that piece of business belongs to me." He indicated Mr. Foster. "'Twas William B. Foster, the man I'm this minute p'inting at, who toiled and sweat and spent his money

scraping that cargo together. If it hadn't been for him it'd never have been put aboard, and I'd never had the chance to carry it."

Mr. Foster stood very erect, and waved a hand in gesture of modification.

"It was at a period of stress," he said. "Dangers pressed in on us. Armed forces were, so to speak, at our gates. The magnificent Jackson, down the river, was sorely beset. He'd word that the enemy was approaching New Orleans by sea in large numbers—trained and veteran troops, splendidly officered and equipped." Foster looked around at those in the room, and his voice sank until it struck a note of foreboding. "The General had little to encourage him. A small body of his old troops, to be sure, but the others were levee workers, sailors, merchants, clerks, some of whom had never handled a rifle, and none of whom had ever stood in line as a soldier. To be sure, there were bodies of men on their way down the river, from Kentucky and Tennessee; there were also the pirates of the Gulf, who had volunteered; but these had not yet joined him.

"Men were lacking, but equipment was his sorest need. Appeals had come up the river; one reached Pittsburgh, and I had the honor to be the person who heard it. . . . Gentlemen, we are only a young community; when the little army at New Orleans was bracing itself for the coming battle, we were five years younger. But, and I tell you this with pride, when I sounded the tocsin, the response was immediate and rich. All that the citizens required to know was that the need was urgent and the time was short. The *Enterprise* lay at her wharf with her hatches open; they filled her until her deck was all but level with the water. And she started down river, with Captain Shreve calling back to me through the dimness of the early night: 'I'll get her there before the enemy, or bust the boiler trying!'"

"That December day, when Jackson closed and barred the country's back door, should ever be a remembered one," said Mr. Thornbury. "And the people of these back settlements have every reason to be proud of the part they played in it."

Foster was seen to be gathering himself for a reply to this, when Mrs. Seeley said their dinner was ready and waiting. They sat down at the long solid table, and the food began to come from the kitchen. They drank mugs of elderberry ale; there were chip baskets filled with Dutch biscuit; double-ended platters were heaped with venison steaks; all down the board were cuts of bear-meat and squat jars of potted squirrel. There were boiled beans, potato patties and

slaw; also stoneware receptacles holding jellied plums and quinces.

Mr. Holt, the banker, beamed as his eyes took in what was put before them, and his round cherubic face was lighted with smiles.

"I had no idea the back country could provide such good food," he told Mrs. Seeley. "It was my idea that farmers and woodcutters here in the hills were hard put to it in the winter months."

"In the fall and winter the woods are full of game," she said. "Some of the meat is dried, some pickled or potted; some which we mean to use soon is frozen. The fruits and vegetables and brews we handle the same as farm people in the thicker-settled places. You can do well enough here if you think a little bit ahead; and I guess that's the way it is everywhere, and in everything."

They talked all through the dinner, and Denis was called upon often to give his view of things. His replies were quite clear; he seemed to see all sides of land transportation, and a good deal of the traffic of the river, with a keen readiness that was most convincing. And Moreau, much impressed by this, once took occasion to whisper to Lois, who sat beside him:

"This young man seems to be surprisingly capable. When he talks of the country and its possibilities, he seems to see it as a picture."

"He does," whispered Lois.

"And," said her father, "some of the words he uses actually seem to sing."

NEXT morning, an hour or two after daybreak, Monselet arrived with the Negro driver. He was full of protestations; he exclaimed and rebuked. Lois, he said, had run into peril; she had left him a prey to all sorts of fears. Suppose she had—Well, suppose any one of a dozen things had happened to her? What could he have said to her father in self-defense? He had been sent with her to protect her, and had failed. Of course he had pleaded with her not to go, but she had insisted. If she'd meant to see her father, why couldn't she have said so?

Lois felt properly humbled by all this, especially as she saw that her father, and even Denis, agreed with the young man. But later there was a thing she observed. Denis took Monselet aside and talked very earnestly with him; and she saw Monselet, little by little, lose the heat that had encompassed him, and gradually become quite anxious. Those facts that were being held back from her had been told to Gerard! She *knew* it! She was more resentful than ever; but she resolved to ask no questions.

Holt prepared to leave the mills immediately, on the first lap of the long journey to New York. He had



the large double-seated carriage with four horses in which they'd left Pittsburgh some days before. Thornbury was to accompany him; also he had persuaded Moreau and Lois to do likewise. At almost the last moment Lois learned that each of the three men in the carriage, also the driver, were armed. Not only that: two sturdy hillmen, well mounted, and carrying heavy holster pistols, were to ride with the party as far as Lancaster. This gave the girl a feeling of immediate danger. She spoke anxiously to Denis, leaning over the side of the carriage, as they were on the point of starting.

"How long will you and Gerard be in Pittsburgh?" she asked.

"No more than a few days. I'll have some letters waiting for me, and I'll speak to some people; then I'll be on the road to Perth Amboy once more. And I hope to see you there."

"Father thinks we shall be there, or at New York, for some weeks," she told him. "I'll be expecting you."

"The Swingletree," said Lemuels. "Are you countin' on going there? I'd advise you not to!"

As the carriage rolled away through the woods, Gerard Monselet observed thoughtfully:

"The road has frightened her. I could see it in her eyes."

"And no wonder," replied Denis, his gaze upon the vanishing carriage. "Her experiences on it have not been quieting. But she has good nerves; she'll recover quickly."

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

FOSTER and Shreve traveled with Denis and Monselet to Pittsburgh. There Denis found matters had been progressing very well.

"Very good trade, gaffer," said Sam Heffner, the wagon-boss. "I think all the canvassing around you've been doing has helped your private business.

But these new people are here, and they've also been doing a good deal of prospecting around. I've heard word they're in the market for horses, and for any wagons that might be for sale." He grinned at Denis. "But we were a little ahead of them in that."

The new people! Denis had word of them wherever he turned. Pursell—Descosings! Quickened life on the road, the urgent flash of new money; cajoling, pressures, promises.

"And," a horse-trader told Denis, "that beating we hear you gave Descosings aint forgotten. He's going to make it up to you somehow. And watch out for Pursell. I hear that fellow's a gouger and a stomper. Don't ever let him get you on the ground; whenever he gets anyone there, they don't get up till he's finished with them."

All the news Denis received about the doings of Foster were quite good. The trader had an extravagant manner: his gestures and oratorical periods were florid; but at the same time he was a capable man of business.

"All this," said Monselet, "must have been going on for some time. At New Orleans, Moreau talked about the forming of a company for river traffic, but I hadn't known it included wagoning as well. And also, the impression he gave was that it was a matter for the future."

Denis smiled. "So did I," he said. "But in the last several months Holt has taken hold of the preparations and seems to have made them jump. I've been working with the thing myself; but until the last few days have had no idea of what progress had been made."

There were some letters for Denis; and one of them, from Thistlewate, he read with a gleam in his eyes. He said nothing about its contents, but Monselet noticed that he was silent and paced the floor restlessly for some time afterward.

THEY were kept in Pittsburgh a few days longer than had been expected. But at daybreak one morning they took the road east. It had snowed during the night, and their progress was slow. They traveled all day, with a few stops to breathe their horses; and in late afternoon reached one of the taverns where Lois had halted on her ride to Flangler's Mills.

They had their steeds stabled and fed, and then had supper beside the tavern fire, where the landlord engaged them in conversation.

"I hope," he said, after he had exchanged the gossip of the road for some time, "you'll not think hard of the house because of the disorder it's in. But last night we had a half-dozen travelers who drank too much and began fighting among themselves, and smashing things."

Denis had noticed the traces of wreckage; now he looked at the landlord inquiringly.

"The teamsters have always taken to the open for their affairs," he said. "They must be changing their habits."

"These were not men I'd seen before," said the host. "They don't belong on this pike; also, Mr. Abernathy, they came horseback and not with wagons. There was one of them, a great beast of a fellow, the kind who turn savage when they have too much to drink; he was the cause of most of it. He beat one of the others very badly. And the man who was in charge of them, their employer, I think, said not a word to stop them. Indeed, he sat by and laughed, and offered Spanish dollars for them to wrestle and fight for."

The weather moderated during the night, and there was a warm rain. The road was bad in the morning, the snow having melted in great part, leaving puddles of water and slush.

"We'll make the Swingletree before night," said Denis. "And tomorrow I think we'll have easier traveling of it. It's going to turn colder, but the water'll have shed off the road before it has time to freeze."

But night was coming on before they came in sight of the little inn. A growing chill was in the air. They saw a mounted man on the road, advancing toward them. When he got within greeting distance, Denis recognized him.

"How are you, Lemuels?" he called.

The old ranger drew up his horse.

"Hello, Denis," he said; "I hadn't recognized you in the dusk."

"You've got a long way ahead of you to the next stopping-place," said Denis.

"If you're meaning the Wagoner's Rest, I surely have," said Lemuels. "But I figure on making camp in the woods for the night."

Denis and Monselet had stopped beside the man.

"It'll be cold camping," said Denis.

"I'm used to that," said the ranger.

"I can clear a place in a few minutes, and cut enough boughs and saplings with my hatchet to make me a wind-break and a bed. Then I'll have a fire. I always have food with me, in case of things going wrong—and a blanket roll to wrap myself up in. The hoss I can put in a sheltered place among the trees, where he'll do very well."

"But," said Denis, "you must have passed the Swingletree only a short time ago. I'd have thought you'd stopped there."

"I did," said Lemuels, "until I found out what company I'd have to keep. A rough, noisy crowd, and a kind I don't like." He sat his horse in silence for a moment or two, and then he said: "Are you countin' on going there?"

"Yes, we are," said Denis.

"I'd not advise you to!" said Lemuels. "While I was there, I heard your name mentioned once or twice. And not favorable." He looked at Denis sharply through the dusk. "You wouldn't be knowing a party named Pursell, would you?"

"Yes," said Denis.

"He's there," said the old ranger, "and interested enough in you to want to smash you flat. The landlord is a good bit worried about it. He told me you might be back there almost any time for a chaise you'd left, and he hoped you'd not come while Pursell was still around."

Denis looked at Monselet.

"What do you think?" he said.

"We'll go on," said Monselet without hesitation.

DENIS spoke to his horse, and waved a hand to the ranger.

"Maybe," said Denis, "Pursell will have cooled down by the time we get there."

Monselet bid Lemuels good-by, and the two were off down the road. The old ranger sat astride his tall gray nag and watched them as they faded bit by bit into the dusk. When they'd altogether disappeared, he pondered a few moments; then he reached for the covered rifle that hung by a loop at his saddle. He looked at the priming with much care. Then he eased the hammer back and re-hung the weapon by its loop once more. He spoke to his horse, turning it by a pressure of the knee; and they moved in the direction of the Swingletree, in the track of the two young men.

Denis and Monselet drew up at the inn, and old Bob took their horses.

"Lots of travel on the road tonight," Bob said. "I've got twelve stalls of horses; yours'll make fourteen. More'n we've had for a long while at any one time."

The public room of the Swingletree was full of noise and pipe-smoke. The inn was not a wagon stand; nevertheless many of its present guests were wagoners, brawny, rough-looking, and quite evidently hard-drinking. Denis spoke to the landlord in a corner of the bar.

"We have accommodations, to be sure, sir," said the man. "But I'm sorry you'll have to tolerate these people. I tried to get rid of them when they arrived, but they were violent and threatening, so I had to take them in."

"It will be well enough," Denis told him. "If you can give us a little hot food and drink, we'll be off to bed in a short while and they'll not bother us."

They were given rooms at the end of the building; then they brushed their clothes and washed the grime of the road from themselves; and as they were about to descend, Denis said:

"Put one of my pistols in your breast pocket." As Monselet looked at him, he added: "I hope you'll not have any need of it, but in uncertain times it's best to be ready."

On the lower floor they went into the bar, and as they stood sipping hot brandy and water, Denis looked around. He felt sure these men were of the same group that had so disturbed the peace of the tavern where he and Monselet had stopped the night before; but he saw nothing of Pursell.

They sat down at a small table, and the bar boy put hot dishes of food before them. As they ate and talked and drank their ale, the noise of the place seemed to increase.

"They are all strangers," said Denis. "I've traveled this road so long I know nearly every man on it. Very likely they are teamsters from Perth Amboy pike, and brought west for something having to do with Pursell's business."

The greater part of the noise seemed to come from a far corner of the room. And there Denis saw Caleb Rush, a shrewd little man, famous as a tin peddler on all the byways for two hundred miles in any direction. Caleb was old, but brisk of foot; and his business sense was sharpened to a needlelike point. Very likely, when he'd arrived at the inn, he'd sensed business among an unusual number of guests, and had brought a quantity of goods into the public room with him. He had woodenware, glassware, tinware; he had dress-goods, beads and notions; he had jewelry and combs, books of recipes, books and broadsides of printed ballads. He talked quality and price; much of what he had on hand, so he stated, was fresh and new to that region. What better way was there to lay out a little money than in things for use in, or for the edification of, the home?

But his glibness was doing nothing for him with the half-drunken teamsters. The more he talked, the louder grew the laughter. They scorned him as a dealer in shoddy; they ridiculed his prices; they mimicked his high-pitched voice. Then they began handling his wares, and finally pitching the articles from one to the other. Tin pans clattered on the floor as they humorously misjudged their flight; now and then a crockery cup or plate was broken into fragments in the same way. The old man protested, but they jeered at him; he tried to prevent their laying hands on his stock, but they shoved him out of the way. Finally in a struggle to wrest a cup from the hands of a man who seemed to be more drunken and reckless than the others, it was broken over Caleb's head.

"Now, now," said Andrews, the host, at this, "enough's enough! I can't have all this uproar. And see"

—indicating the little peddler—"you've started the blood of him. That's a nasty cut, and you should be ashamed of it. —Take care, Caleb; don't paw at it now. Go back into the kitchen, and the Missus'll clean it for you and put a bandage on it."

The tin-peddler was thin and old, but he had courage.

"You are a ruffian!" he told the wagoner. "You are a coward!"—facing him like a small fighting-cock with its feathers ruffled.

But the man threw him to one side contemptuously. Andrews tried to prevent this, but received a blow that sent him sprawling and reeling. At this, Denis arose. A half-dozen steps took him to the man's side; he grasped him, and pinned him against the wall.

"That," said the young man, "is a plenty from you. Settle down now, and let's have no more like it, or I'll pitch you outdoors. And if I do, you'll stay there for the rest of the night."

The wagoner gaped in astonishment for a moment; then he tried to free himself from the powerful hand that held him. Not being able to do this, he began to swing his fists at Denis; but the young man was taller and longer in the arms, and easily held him away.

"Ease down!" said Denis. "Don't be a fool! It's a cold night, and outdoors will not be too pleasant."

JUST as the man renewed his struggles, Denis felt a hand touch his shoulders. It was Monselet.

"Take care," said the young Creole in a low voice. "Here is Pursell, just come into the room."

Denis looked over his shoulder. Sure enough, there was the wagonmaster, standing looking at him, a cold, hard smile showing through his clipped beard. The young man released the lunging ruffian he'd been holding against the wall; and as he did so, the man came plunging at him. Denis slipped aside with an adroitness that made Monselet stare; there was a trip and a heave, and the wagoner crashed to the floor.

The man was springing to his feet, swearing gustily and preparing to renew the combat; but Pursell motioned to the other men: the combative one was grasped, and despite his furious protestations, pulled aside. And then Pursell turned to Denis.

"It was mentioned to me that you'd be likely to stop here," he said. "And I've taken a good deal of pleasure waiting to see if you would."

Denis stared at him for a moment; then he threw off his short heavy jacket, tightened his belt, and made long, sweeping motions with his arms, loosening the big muscles of his shoulders.

"You are the man who thinks he's a pretty good rough-and-tumble fight-

er," he said. "You told me as much that night at the Ox Bow." He was still staring at Pursell, and Monselet was almost startled at the cold glint in his eyes. "I didn't care to bother with you then; but I'm glad you've waited for me, for I'd like the thing between us settled before I go East."

There was a silence in the room: the landlord, nursing a dark bruise at his temple, was whispering with his frightened wife. The wagoners stood in a group, looking at each other in something like amazement. For it was Pursell being spoken to in this wise: the ferocious, grappling slugger who fought like a gorilla and who, it was said, had not stopped at murder in more than one of his desperate encounters. But Monselet grasped the motive behind the young man's challenging outburst. Denis had sensed, perhaps, in the moment he stood staring at Pursell, that the man's power lay in his always seizing a brutal initiative. Take the first quick, merciless movement from him, and his authority would be reduced perhaps by one half.

And indeed, surprise was evident in Pursell's face: for an instant there was hesitation. Then his jaw was clamped tightly, and he motioned for all to stand away and give space. Denis stood motionless as this was being done; but the moment it was, he lifted one hand.

"Outside!" he said. "A room will not do for this."

He threw open the door and leaped out into the semi-dark. There was a light burning at the top of a post near the carriage-block, and another at the stable door a short distance away: these gave what little illumination there was. The rain was still falling; there were puddles of water, heaps of snow; the air was damp and cold.

The people from the inn came pouring through the doorway, huddled in coats and tarpaulins; Monselet, watching Pursell, saw him, tense with anger and his head lowered, follow them out. The man had been taken aback; instead of a masterful rush and a cascade of blows, a swift grapple, a rending, animal-like struggle on the ground. He found himself thrown out of stride, found himself following his adversary's lead.

Monselet heard a voice at his side: he turned and saw Lemuels, the old ranger, his rifle tucked under his arm.

"Win or lose," said the old man, "there might be trouble after this is over. Got a shooting-iron, son?" And when Monselet nodded, Lemuels said: "That's good. Keep it dry and handy. There's two or three other good strong boys here that I know, and who are ready for blasting if it's needed."

Denis had pulled off his shirt and flung it into the snow. He was sloshing around in the puddles, but when

Pursell came within distance, leaped at him without a word. There was a storm of short, vicious blows; they grappled and fell to the ground. As they fought, Pursell bent one knee and tried to drive it into Denis' groin; but the young man, watching for this very thing, threw his weight upon the leg and blocked it. Now, Pursell, with a heave of his mighty body, threw him off; as he did so, he shifted his grip and tried to reach one of Denis' eyes with his thumb. Denis seized the arm, but in an instant he knew there was more power in it than he could control. But he'd avoided the gouging thumb, and that was enough for the moment.

The water, the clogging snow, were interfering with Pursell's methods; his terrible hands found it difficult to get a grip on the young man's wet, naked body. Denis drove an elbow into the thick throat and smiled grimly when he heard an answering gasp. Pursell was tremendously strong; in combat he had the hard, brutal ecstasy of one who loves to destroy. But he was not young. In a short brawl under his own conditions, he was invincible; but his routine had been broken when he'd been led into something altogether unfavorable. He seemed to realize this and began to fight madly, hoping to break the spirit and body of his opponent by the increasing animalism of his tactics.

But Denis Abernathy's body was tough, and his spirit had a pride that would not be terrorized. By methods taught him by Owen in his boyhood, he broke holds that would have crushed him. He avoided the deadly bent knee, and the tearing, gouging fingers, and he dealt out answering brutalities of his own. They thrashed and struggled and struck as they rolled about in the dirty snow and filthy water of the inn yard. Blood-smearing, panting, but with strength that seemed never ending, they fought. Denis knew he was steadily holding his own, that in the next five minutes he'd have the upper hand. But suddenly—he never knew how it was done—he felt the short, powerful legs of the wagonmaster locked about him. They tightened swiftly, holding him as though he were caught in a steam-driven machine.

He heard Pursell laugh. He struggled to break the lock, but could not. And he felt it creeping higher. Once the pressure was applied to his stomach and chest, he knew he'd be helpless.

"You're done!" wheezed Pursell. "No one's ever got out of this, once I got it."

Denis heaved once, twice, three times; all his power was applied to escape the crushing power applied to him. Then a fourth heave—but this time suddenly altered in intention. In

an instant he had Pursell on his back and had seized him by both ears. Then he dashed his head into the man's face. Again and again he repeated the terrific blow. Pursell fought like a fiend in an effort to stem this attack; and in his efforts, the power of his leg-lock slackened; Denis tore himself loose and leaped up. The code of the road was such that a fallen man was not permitted to rise until he'd signaled his defeat. But Denis stood back; he'd fought Pursell's way. And now he meant to fight his own.

"Get up!" he said stonily.

Pursell, smeared with dirt and blood and looking unutterably wretched, got to his feet. He was not beaten. He was the sort that would never be beaten while he had an atom of strength, or an evil trick in reserve. He staggered, made signs of distress; he seemed to appeal for mercy. And all the time he was getting nearer and nearer to Denis. Then his hands shot out; he tried to take the young man by the throat. But Denis stepped back out of reach, and then suddenly forward. His fist struck the man on the side of the head. Pursell stood motionless for a moment; then his knees gave way, and he fell.

"Fairly beaten," said Lemuels, moving in front of Denis, his thumb in the hammer of his long rifle. "And now, boys,"—to the wagoners gathered in a tight knot, and dangerously silent,—"that will be all. I'm an officer of the State gov'ment, and am empowered to put out fires, perform marriages and keep the peace. I do all three pretty well. But keeping the peace is my specialty, and I do it better than either of the others. So scatter now—and make up your minds to behave. Otherwise, I'll have to call on my deppities who you'll see standing around, and what'll come after that'll do none of you any good."

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

DENIS ABERNATHY and Gerard Monselet arrived in Philadelphia after two weeks on the road. A part of this time had been taken up by detours. There were people Denis wanted to see; he'd talked business with them; he'd made pacts for the future. He saw old friends; he made new ones.

The two young men arrived in the city about nightfall and drove to the Black Horse in Second Street. There were letters awaiting them at the post office next day—one for Monselet from Moreau. He said he was in New York with Lois, and that they were lodged with their relatives the Sigournays, in Pine Street. He wrote further:

"But things appear in a most unfavorable light as far as my affairs with the firm of Moreau, Descoings & Abernathy are concerned. These men, so I

am now convinced, are cold-blooded rascals. Henri is much the worse of the two, for Louis is a common ruffian and is easily seen through. However, there are some things that seem to have promise. I have talked with Thistlewate; he says very little, but his silence seems to indicate something. He asks me to wait. He says things are happening—small, but important, when grouped together.

"A thing I'm giving heed to here at Sigournays' is the conversation of Felix. It seems he's been promised quite a number of things by Henri Descoings in the past, but none of the promises has come to anything.

"I know Felix of old: a stupid, money-hunting, advantage-taking person. And vicious in his resentments. He keeps muttering about injuries he's suffered. As you know, it was Felix who brought about my father's association with Descoings in the first place. I've spoken to Counselor Thistlewate about all this, and he agrees with me that Felix may be acquainted with some things of interest to both myself and young Abernathy. However, the next week or two will perhaps tell a good deal more.

"And I hope, Gerard, that you may see your way clear to coming on to New York as soon as possible after receiving this. It is always helpful to have someone who can be depended upon when things are not going well and one is in a strange place. Lois, to be sure, is stanch and intelligent. But after all, she is a young girl, and these matters are of a kind that she knows little about.

"She joins me in greetings to Abernathy, also in hoping that we shall see more of him in the near future."

Denis read this letter, when Monselet handed it to him. And he said: "If you have nothing to keep you in Philadelphia, it would be wise to go, as Moreau suggests. The next little while may show something of importance, and neither he nor Lois should be left alone."

The result of this was that Monselet boarded a sloop for Burlington next morning, and then took the coach for Perth Amboy. In the meantime, Denis visited the brokerage house of Turner & Vreed, and had a long conversation with Seth Turner regarding matters they had discussed in their last meeting. It was shown that Turner had gone deeply into some of these, and his findings had been set down in a sheaf of closely written pages of cap.

"These are facts, opinions and reports," said the broker as he turned the pages over to Denis. "Read them. Some of the things surprised me. They may do the same to you."

Denis read the sheets that afternoon; and his brow was dark and his jaw set as he put them in his pocket. At once he visited Thornbury's counting-



There was a storm of short, vicious blows; they grappled and fell to the ground. Pursell bent one knee and tried to drive it into Denis' groin; but the young man threw his weight upon the leg and blocked it.

house in Water Street. A clerk told him Mr. Thornbury was aboard his clipper, the *Shogun*, then lying at a wharf opposite the warehouse and unloading a cargo newly arrived from the Far East. The young man found the merchant on the after-deck, watching the bales and hogheads as they were swung out of the hold.

"A rich shipful," he told Denis as he shook him by the hand. "Tea, raw silk, drugs, tortoise shells, piece goods, nankeens. Most of it in rare time, too. The market is in excellent condition."

However, Thornbury took the time to read Turner's written sheets, and listened to what Denis had to say. And he shook his head in astonishment.

"A remarkable succession of incidents," he said. "And they follow each other so closely that it's not possible they are unconnected. I will keep the principal features in mind," he told Denis, "and I feel sure I can find answers for some of them. In a few days you'll hear from me."

That night, Denis dined with Turner at the City Tavern. They had oyster soup, some bits of baked haddock, and a leg of mutton roasted over an open fire. And they talked over their hot rum and smoked their pipes until late in the night.

"I think," said Turner as they parted at the tavern door, "this gives you something, but I'm afraid a good deal more is needed."

"What you've done," said Denis, "will help me greatly. The next weeks will prove its value."

"Some of the others may have information that isn't actively in their minds," said Turner. "That often happens. When you begin to talk with them these things, perhaps never thought to be of value, will pop to the surface. Watch for them."

A FEW days later Denis was in New York, and closeted with Counselor Thistlewate.

"The matter, as you see," said the Counselor, after some talk and with an air of satisfaction, "has been reduced to comfortable proportions. It is now fairly well in hand. We have some quite pointed material to use. And,"—his hands were folded across his stomach as he leaned back in his big chair,— "an array of facts that may be very awkward for the opposition."

He displayed letters, reports, transcripts,—seemed to be in excellent humor; and he gave Denis a detailed account of what he'd been doing since they'd last met. In turn, Denis went over the list of things that had happened on the turnpike to the West; and as he continued, the round face of the Counselor was sometimes dark and amazed; often, again, it was an array of mirthful wrinkles.

"The rascals have carried the matter too far. And what you tell me

joins very nicely with the things I've heard lately from Kipper."

"You've seen him, then?"

"Yes, some days ago. A very clever, close-mouthed fellow," said the Counselor admiringly. "He has not only courage, but tenacity. A very bulldog of a person."

Thistlewate then went into the sides of the affair as heard from the horse surgeon; after that, he sketched out an immediate plan of action.

"You expect to open the matter quite soon, then?" said Denis.

"If all is favorable, tomorrow night. I have an appointment with Moreau at the *Sigournays*'. I selected the time because it is one of Descouings' chess nights in Pine Street."

NEXT evening, in the drawing-room of the shabby old mansion in Pine Street, candles were burning in the brass holders; the curtains were drawn and a fire burned on the hearth. It was a cold night, and some snow had fallen.

Hester Sigourney sat at the spinet and dawdled over a sentimental air. She looked exceedingly scraggy in a worn yellow satin gown.

"I think," she said to Drusilla, who sat upon a small sofa by the fireside, "Henri may not come tonight. Cold weather does not agree with him."

"Cold weather or not, he'd not lose a chance of winning from Felix at chess," said Drusilla. "He hasn't lost a game to him all winter long."

Felix Sigourney sat across the room with Moreau, talking in his loud, flat voice; and Hester, her eyes sparkling with anticipation, looked over her shoulder at him.

"Felix!" she shrieked, "is it possible you haven't won a match with Henri all winter?"

"What?" shouted Felix, a hand at one ear. "What's that?" Hester repeated what she'd said, in a tone higher and thinner and more pointed with small malice. Felix caught enough of it to make him swell with instant resentment.

"Where in the world do you women get this twaddle you talk?" he said.

"Henri is merely a fortunate player. He is not clever. All his moves are obvious. But he is fortunate."

"Haven't I heard you say," screeched Drusilla, "that good fortune always comes with effort and skill?"

Felix apparently only received a part of this, but he seemed to know it was a saying to be instantly combated.

"Henri is a hit-or-miss player," he stated emphatically. "He is a speculator in opportunity. Everything he does is of that kind. Even his business," he said to Moreau, "is carried on that way."

Moreau shook his head; he did not agree with the statement.

"He is crafty," was Moreau's opinion; "he weighs everything carefully."

The Creole spoke slowly, forming his words with precision, and Felix caught at their values.

"He gives that impression. But it's a pose. I have learned that he does not always know opportunity. Not only on the chessboard, but in his serious affairs. A thousand times," said Felix loudly, "I have seen him miss when the matter should have been in his hand."

"Henri has not treated Felix with consideration," said Hester to Moreau. "And Felix resents it."

"It's been shameful!" said Drusilla. "Felix has ability, and has been of service to the Descouings. But they make no return. They do not even acknowledge his help."

Felix did not get the drift of this; he muttered and scowled for a time. He fidgeted in his chair.

"This new company he's forming," he said, "is an example of his methods. I warned him against some of the ways he's taken, and some of the people he's engaged with. Not only that, but I studied the whole matter of transportation carefully, and laid my findings before him. All logical, all free of evasions. I met problems fairly, and solved them. And," demanded Felix, "what did he do? What sort of an answer did he give me? None! He was silent," said Felix bitterly. "It was just as though I'd never spoken. He ignored me."

"As I've said, it's outrageous!" said Drusilla to Moreau in a low tone, as though afraid Felix would hear. "Absolutely shameful!"

"Felix is a person of parts," stated Hester. "A man of commercial genius. This treatment has hurt him badly."

There was a soft ring at the doorbell, and the footsteps of the manservant in the hall.

"There is Henri now," said Hester. She put a finger to her lips, and looked from one to the other. "Remember, not a word."

BUT it was Counselor Thistlewate, with a green bag stuffed with documents.

"An evil night," he said. "And it's growing more so." He shook hands with them all. Both Drusilla and Hester voiced shrill pleasure, but looked at the stout old Counselor with little warmth.

"I had forgotten to say," explained Moreau, "that I'd been expecting Mr. Thistlewate. On some matters of business. And I'm very sorry," he said to the Counselor, "to have brought you out in such weather."

"No harm," Thistlewate assured him heartily. "I'm a tough old campaigner, and weather does me no hurt at all." He put his bag upon a table and

warned himself by the fire. He talked with the sisters and with Moreau for some little while; and then, noticing Felix sitting glumly silent, said to him: "A great pleasure to see you, Felix. I seldom have the opportunity."

"The Counselor is speaking to you, Felix," said Drusilla shrilly, seeing that he gave no attention.

"What do you say?" said Felix, his hand at his ear.

"The Counselor," said Drusilla, motioning toward Thistlewate.

"Oh, how do you do?" said Felix morosely. "I'd an idea I'd spoken to you as you came in." He rubbed his hands together and nodded toward the table. "That bag looks as if it was stuffed with business." He gave a short and not pleasant laugh. "When papers are packed together that way, they mean trouble for someone."

Thistlewate laughed.

"They are some things I want to call Moreau's attention to. He has grown rather uneasy lately."

Felix must have caught the full import of this, for he said:

"He has every reason to be uneasy. Of that, Counselor, I can assure you." "Felix!" said Hester, in a warning tone.

"What's left of his shipping business?" asked Felix. "Once a fine thriving trade! But he has had untrustworthy associates. Untrustworthy," said Felix, nodding his round head, "and dangerous."

Drusilla and Hester exchanged glances; their wicked old eyes were filled with mingled dread and joy.

"Felix is in a mood tonight," Hester said in a hushed tone, looking at Thistlewate. "It would be as well to pay no attention to him."

"He spends a good deal of time alone, because of his deafness. He sits and thinks," Drusilla told them, "and that is not good for anyone."

Felix heard none of this, and proceeded addressing Moreau.

"I regret I ever mentioned the Descoings to your father. My notion was that it would be a smart connection. Henri's father, I thought, would make a splendid alignment in the North for a flourishing New Orleans house." Felix shook his head. "Of course, I didn't know old Descoings would die so soon. Neither did I think Henri, when he came into authority, would face about as he has done."

"Felix!" shrieked Drusilla, delighted. "You are talking too much!"

"He is in a mood," Hester assured the others. "We just close our ears when it comes on him."

Felix was continuing his remarks when the manservant came in and announced that Mr. Descoings and Mr. Dacre were in the hall. Drusilla went through a vigorous pantomime of warning to Felix. He was silenced,

and sat sullenly twiddling his thick fingers and nodding his head as the two men appeared in the doorway.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

HENRI wore a heavy woolen shawl about his shoulders. There were flakes of snow upon this, and upon the wide brim of his hat. Dacre was enveloped in a long blue cloak. Henri waited until the shawl had been removed; then he postured in the Metternich manner, bowed, and advanced with stately tread to receive the greetings of the ladies.

"Henri!" chided Drusilla. "On such a night!"

"You should not have ventured," said Hester.

Henri smiled; he gestured to the effect that to a person of will and determination nothing was too much.

"The weather is severe, to be sure," he said. "And I was of two minds about leaving my own fireside. But Dacre volunteered to come with me; also I saw to it that I was well wrapped up in the carriage."

"It was your chess that tempted you," smiled Drusilla, her withered face crinkling. She looked at Hester, and said: "Those little ivory pieces have him fascinated."

"Chess always has that effect on clever people," said Hester. "They are not able to resist." She shook her head girlishly at Henri. "Felix was just now mentioning your play. He admires it."

"He plays a sturdy game, himself," Henri approved. "Not brilliant, but what might be called insistent."

Dacre had been exchanging words with Thistlewate during this, and now he said:

"Mr. Descoings, have you noticed the Counselor?"

Henri Descoings stared at the old attorney in a way that indicated he had, but would rather not.

"I had not expected this pleasure, Thistlewate," he said coldly.

Descoings then spoke aside to Moreau and Felix.

"I had hoped," he said to Moreau, aside, "that I'd have an uninterrupted opportunity this evening for conversation with you."

"There is no reason why you should not," Moreau told him.

"I dislike the presence of Thistlewate," said Henri, with an annoyed frown. "He is not friendly."

FELIX, whose hearing was quite normal at times, laughed loudly.

"That is putting it quite mildly," he said, in his flat, bawling voice. "As a matter of fact, he hates the sight of you." And turning to Moreau, Felix added: "There's no love lost between them, you can be sure of that. It's

been a regular stand-up fight for years."

"Felix!" screeched Drusilla. "Please moderate your voice!"

Felix, looking about, saw that he had made something of a sensation, and appeared quite well pleased.

"No harm done. It's no news, except perhaps to Moreau, here—he being a stranger in these parts."

Descoings drew Moreau farther aside and spoke to him in a low confidential voice.

Dacre stood with Thistlewate at the fireside, undisturbed and smiling.

"It has pleased me a good deal," he told them, "to notice Mr. Descoings' manner with Moreau. It is so thoughtful and considerate."

"Henri," said the Counselor, "has always had that way with him."

There was a shade of meaning in this saying that caused both Drusilla and Hester to look at each other enjoyingly. But Dacre proceeded, with no change of expression or tone.

"Moreau, of course, is distressed by the condition of his affairs," he said. "And, so it seems, he has no idea about the cause of it." Dacre lifted a gentle hand. "It is change," he said. "Things are always changing, though we are not always aware of it. And this being so, we sometimes do not change with them. The Moreaus are, as we all know, New Orleans people. Always comfortably circumstanced, and with a good income from their ships. They had thought, as well-conditioned people often have the habit of doing, that this would go on always. But," said Dacre, "steam came in. And with steam came a new class of people—a pushing, determined class. At the appearance of these, the Moreaus began to fade. Their trade began to thin out; their credits sank. They found themselves in trouble."

Felix, apparently, had heard the names of Moreau and Descoings. Possibly he'd also heard the mention made of trade. At any rate he got up and joined the group at the fireside.

"What's this about trouble?" he asked. "Who's having it?"

"Dacre was speaking of the Moreaus and their business," said the Counselor. "Mr. Dacre was telling of the cause of his shipping business falling off," explained the old attorney.

"What does Dacre know about it?" asked Felix, staring at the man intollerantly. "He's not a trader. He's not a shipman. He's never even been a merchant."

Dacre smiled.

"I'm afraid Mr. Sigourney has very little respect for my accomplishments," he said.

"What's that?" demanded Felix. He looked at his sisters. "What did he say?"

"That you have little respect for his accomplishments," Drusilla told him.



"I haven't any!" declared Felix vehemently. "Not a particle." He set himself solidly before them and thumped a closed hand into an open one. "I've been wanting to say a few things for some time," he said, "and I think this occasion will do very well for it." He saw that both Moreau and Henri Descoings had paused in their talk and were looking inquiringly in his direction. "I've given a good deal of service to the Descoings," he said. "And I expected something in return. But,—glaring toward Henri,—"what did I get? Nothing!"

"You promised me a good deal, Henri. Not in plain words, but in

every other way. In the end, I'd find I'd profit by what was being done. That went on for years, and I got nothing. When this new matter came up, this extending of the firm's dealings into the West and then down the river to New Orleans, it was the same. I was still to wait. I was still to be patient. Things were ripening fast. My time was coming. But the planning has gone on: I have never been consulted. I have been ignored and neglected; I suppose I've even been laughed at. But, Henri, I'll not be again. Not again. I've finished with you. These last few weeks have shown me, if I needed showing, that you'd

never had any intention of making use of my experience or talent."

"Dacre," said Henri, "I think we had better go. If you will speak to the man, he'll get our things."

Felix gave Dacre a fleeting look. "Well, thank God," said Felix. "I've escaped being any one's valet. Very likely."—to Henri.—"you knew I'd never be at your beck and call, and that is why you went all the way to Jamaica to get a man to fit into the place that should have been mine."

"Felix," cried Hester in mock dismay, "what are you thinking of?"

"There are a number of things," said Felix. "And some of them I've

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"All went very well," Kipper said later. "We were on watch, and took him as he came out."

been giving my attention for a long time. Also,"—to Thistlewate,—“there are a few I’ve been trying to find an answer for.” He looked at Henri, his heavy cheeks puffed out, his brow and bare head thick with beads of sweat. “I’ve often wondered about Dacre,” he said. “A sugar planter in Jamaica, with no experience in commercial business, and with a curious reputation. You sent to Jamaica for him, Henri, and made him manager of certain of your affairs. That is one of the things I’ve tried to get an answer for.”

“Dacre,” said Henri, impatiently gesturing toward the hall.

“In a moment, Mr. Descoings,” answered the man.

Thistlewate saw the flesh drawn white and thin across Henri Descoings’ nose; he saw a quiet and yet, oddly enough, furious effort to maintain the customary pose. And the old Counselor touched Felix upon the sleeve, and said into his ear:

“You say you tried for an answer in Jamaica?”

“Yes,” Felix said. “I had some dependable people I knew in Kingston look into the matter for me. Dacre,” Felix said to Descoings, “had, as I’ve mentioned, a curious reputation: He was a planter and slave-owner. It was

his habit, when a slave displeased him, to shoot him. The authorities had him in hand several times for this—also for mistreatment of animals. But there was a lack of proper evidence. However, Henri, when one of your ships took him out of the island, he had come to a spot where he was really in danger of being hanged.”

“Rot!” said Henri Descoings, his head up, his look cold and scornful. “You’ve always been a gossip, Felix. And that you have a good deal of malice in you is well known.”

“These things are written in the public records of Kingston,” said Felix. “A search of them would prove what I say.”

“If I may say so,” said Counselor Thistlewate, “I’ve heard mention of this before, and from various sources.” He indicated the green bag on the table. “The doings of Dacre in Jamaica are dealt with in several of the papers which I meant to discuss with Mr. Moreau tonight. If you have the time, we shall all three of us sit down with them. They will throw a good deal of light on a number of things having to do with the Moreau interests, and also those of the Abernathys, in the firm of Moreau, Descoings & Abernathy.”

“I recall telling you, some years ago, Thistlewate, that I wanted to hear no more on those subjects from you,” said Henri. “And I have not changed my mind.”

THE old Counselor regarded him with easy good humor.

“There was a time, Henri, when you could put such things aside at will. But it does me good to tell you that that time has passed. A good deal has happened since Simon Abernathy’s death, and since his grandson came down out of the Pennsylvania hills. You must listen now; not only to me, but later to the established courts of the State of New Jersey.”

Henri Descoings looked at the old attorney with disdain.

“You have always been ready with hints about courts,” he said. “It is the usual patter of your kind.” He went to the door and looked up and down the passage. “Where the devil is Dacre!” he said impatiently.

“You probably did not hear him leave a few moments ago,” said Thistlewate.

“Dacre! Leave!” Descoings looked at him over his shoulder, the first trace of alarm in his face.

“I paid special attention to him when the first mention was made of Jamaica,” said the Counselor. “The thought of leaving came to him then. I think he saw at once that what had happened in that place might light a trail of suspicion to Perth Amboy. For the murder of a slave on an isolated plantation, and that of a de

frauded old man in a New Jersey town, might readily find a meeting spot in someone's mind."

There was a kind of cold horror tightening in Henri Descoings' face; but he kept the note of disdain in his voice as he said:

"What damned drivel are you talking?"

Here the knocker sounded on the street door, and the black manservant was heard padding down the hall. Kipper, the horse surgeon, stood there when it was opened, kicking the snow from his half-boots. And when he saw Thistlewate, who'd come into the hall, he entered.

"All went very well, Counselor," he said. "We were on watch, and we took Dacre as he came out."

"Competently done," said the old attorney, with satisfaction. "Quite workmanlike." Kipper was now at the drawing-room door, brushing the snow from his hat. "You are acquainted with Mr. Henri Descoings, I think," said Thistlewate.

Kipper cocked an eye at Henri.

"I hope I see you well," he said.

"Is this man an officer?" asked Henri of Thistlewate. The attorney nodded, and Henri looked at Kipper. "You have arrested Mr. Dacre?"

"Yes," said the man. "Charge of murder."

Henri stood erect and motionless; his face was white. Felix Sigourney, his hand cupped at his ear, leaned over Thistlewate's shoulder.

"What? What was that?" he asked.

"Dacre has been taken for murder!" screeched Drusilla.

"By gad!" said Felix, staring.

Then Henri spoke, in a low voice.

"I think the lot of you have gone mad!" he said.

"A few hours ago," said Kipper, "I gave your son over to the New Jersey authorities. My business here,—as Henri stood silent,—"is to give you to the New York officers on the same charge." He motioned to the black servant, who stood near by, to open the door.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

THE next few weeks were filled with astonishments in Perth Amboy. In every group of people concerned with shipping, with wagoning, with horse-dealing, with any of the trades having to do with transportation, the disclosures ran deeply.

The stately Henri Descoings was in the county prison; Louis, his son, was also there; and the benevolent, mild-eyed Evans Dacre. All for the murder of Simon Abernathy! And now had appeared the hitherto unknown Moreau of the firm, and sat in Henri's place in the counting-room. There had appeared, with his strong hand

confidently gripping the affairs of the house, the lately known grandson of old Simon. Counselor Thistlewate had reappeared in the business after years of absence and was conferring each day with the firm's connections. . . .

Felix Sigourney sat by the fireside in the bleak old Pine Street house, drinking his hot rum while he bawled conversationally with his sisters.

"They leaped in without a moment's hesitation," he said. "That was old Thistlewate's doings; he's always been a great believer in possession."

"François couldn't manage the business at New Orleans," screeched Drusilla. "How can anyone suppose he'll do better at Amboy?"

"Young Abernathy's there," said Felix. "He's not a shipping-man, but he's the kind that always knows how to get hold of those who have what he hasn't himself. These Philadelphia people, like young Turner, the broker, and Holt, the banker, and a dozen or so others, are in and out and round about." Felix drank some of the hot rum, and laughed. "They're in the counting-room with all the facts and tendencies of the business for years back at their fingers' ends. And Henri and his son are in prison, not able to say a word in protest. For, after all, these men are their partners; their right is unquestioned."

"The talk is that Dacre has admitted the murder," screamed Hester, with enjoyment. "And he says Henri told him to do it."

"Not by direct word," maintained Felix. "Henri would never do that. But I can see him suggesting it, little by little, day by day. As I've told you, Dacre was brought from Jamaica to do that very deed. The man is a kind of homicidal maniac, and Henri knew it. What chance had I," he bawled, "with such opposition for the firm's favor? Dacre was specially trained for what was required. I'd have been a novice."

Counselor Thistlewate sat in an armchair in Henri Descoings' office. Kipper sat upon a window-ledge, smoking a long Spanish cigar. Denis Abernathy and François Moreau stood by the desk, listening to what the old attorney was saying.

"The articles of partnership drawn between the Descoings, Abernathys and the Moreaus, are perfect pieces of legal lacework," said Thistlewate, in high good humor. "I have submitted them for examination to several colleagues, who were enchanted by the acuteness of the word-traps in each instrument. I would have been greatly pleased with an opportunity to go into court in protest against these documents. It would have been a wonderful exercise in jurisprudence. But I doubt if any reputable attorney

would take the case in the face of the mass of evidence we have lately accumulated: showing years of deliberate waste of the Abernathy and Moreau interests, falsifications of records and criminal conspiracy.

"However," he told them, "while our prospects are less exciting, they are much more satisfactory." He looked at Kipper, and continued: "Our friend here has come at my request to give you some account of his work in this matter. So let us hear him."

KIPPER shook the ash from his cigar and looked reflectively at the toes of his dusty half-boots.

"When the authorities at Amboy couldn't find the person who fired the shot at Simon Abernathy in the first attempt to assassinate him, the officials of the county seat asked me to look into the matter. I had known Mr. Abernathy for some time; also I'd helped the State in a number of instances and they had confidence in me. I didn't make much headway; there didn't seem to be much to work on. But I stuck to the affair.

"When the second attempt was made on the old man—they tried to stab him just outside the counting-house—I began to think, for the first time, that someone in the place might be the person I was looking for. So, I began to study them, one by one. I learned nothing until I came to the members of the firm and found the Descoings hated the old man and had been trying for a long time to squeeze him out of the business. This was something, but not much in itself. I had to have more. The third try at murder—the one I prevented—I've already told you about," the man said to Denis.

"I'd known Dacre for some time, and always liked him," proceeded Kipper. "I tried, now and then, to get information from him about the Descoings. And he always gave me ready and what seemed like honest answers. One evening I went to see your grandfather, and found him in a bad way. He'd been failing for a long time. He'd mentioned you, and I'd told him he ought to send for you. The Counselor told him the same thing. He wrote the letter this night, and I put it in the post. I met Dacre in the lower passage as I was going out, and he asked how Simon was getting on. I told him not very well; that he'd written a letter to his grandson asking him to come to Amboy, and that I expected it to make a good bit of difference in more ways than one.

"Dacre," said Kipper, "was standing in the light of a whale-oil lamp which hung from the ceiling. I had unlatched the street door while speaking, and then turned to bid him good night.

And for an instant I caught a look in his face that changed every thought I had concerning him. Next day I began searching into his history, just as I'd done with the Descoings.

"When you begin to study a person," said Kipper, "things you hadn't expected often pop up. I found, among people Dacre associated with at times, that he'd made bad impressions. He'd a strain of cruelty in him; there were times when he got satisfaction out of tormenting things and people. I inquired into his history before coming to America. He'd been in the British army—an officer; and in India he'd killed a native official. For this he'd been dropped from the service and sent back to England. He was in Cuba later, and got into trouble there, also. In Jamaica, the same thing happened; then he came here."

"Did you mention your suspicions to my grandfather?" asked Denis.

"I did. But he did no more than sit and look at me. The only thing he said was to bid me tell you to beware of Louis Descoings. You arrived at Amboy on that same day."

"Some time had passed since the third attempt on Simon's life," said Counselor Thistlewate, "and my belief is that the old man was so failing in health that they'd expected him to die, and they'd made up their minds to let him do so. But when they learned he'd sent that letter, they saw things differently. They knew he'd tell everything that had happened, and also all his beliefs and suspicions. And so Dacre murdered him."

SILENCE fell in the room; then Kipper went on, addressing Denis: "When you left Amboy for Philadelphia, I had an uneasy feeling about you. You were going West. Louis Descoings was on the turnpike, and I'd heard he meant to journey in that same direction with Pursell on business. And when, within a day after you'd gone, I saw Dacre also take to the road, I made up my mind to follow. Dacre missed you when you stopped at Philadelphia. But somewhere along the road he must have got word you were behind him, and rode back. I warned you; and that night at the States Arms Tavern I waited to see what would happen. I saw Dacre open your door; as he did, I had a pistol barrel resting on the stair rail with the hammer lifted. In another moment I'd have shot him. But you awakened; he stole back into his room and shut the door. I knew then that there'd be nothing more for the night, so I left."

"I'd had word from the Counselor that Mr. Moreau was at Pittsburgh. And after the affair at the Ox Bow, a post rider told me he was to visit at Flangler's Mills with some people from the East. I thought Dacre might

have information of this and that, judging from the way he was riding, he might be there on a deadly business. I passed him in the night while he rested at an inn. And it was then I left the message at the Swingletree.

"From what I've learned since, Dacre didn't know of the Flangler's Mills visit at that time. But when he did hear of it, he started for that place at daybreak."

"Your thought was that he meant to take my life?" said Moreau.

"It was. And I said so to Denis Abernathy when I met him on the road the night he got my message. But we thought it might be best if nothing was said about it, and that Denis go on to the Mills to keep guard over you. And I was to get word back to the inn where your daughter and nephew were, that he might be delayed. I watched the Mills all next day; Dacre didn't come along until after nightfall. I was within a dozen yards of him when he lifted his pistol to fire at you, but I shot first. When I found I'd missed, I did not try to follow; he hadn't seen me, and I knew I could take him at Amboy any time I cared to."

KIPPER drew at his cigar; then he looked at it critically and mended a broken place in the wrapper.

"In spite of all this there wasn't enough evidence to take the man into court and do anything with him. We could have proved nothing by his opening of Abernathy's door at the States Arms. He didn't fire the pistol at Flangler's Mills, and, in the dark, I was not even sure it was he who held it. But when I got back to Amboy, Voxer, the constable, told me the maid who had worked for the Dacres wasn't with them any longer, and had begun to weaken on some of the things she'd said at the inquest. I talked with her. She was frightened. She told me that, out of pity for Mrs. Dacre, who was a good woman, she'd lied. She had not been away from the Dacre house on the day of Simon Abernathy's murder. Dacre's wife hadn't been away; the woman said Dacre had come home in midafternoon, and had gone into Simon's room. He seemed to be in a rage. Mrs. Dacre was greatly agitated; she locked herself in her bedroom."

"When old Simon came home it was toward evening. The maid was in the kitchen and heard him go up the stairs. And then she heard Dacre follow him. She heard the room door close sharply; and the old man cried out. She came out into the passage, and looked up the well of the staircase; and she saw Dacre come out of the room and set the door carefully ajar. She went back into the kitchen as he came down the stairs."

"I took Louis Descoings in this office on that same night," said Kipper.

"At the Descoings house in New York we found Henri had gone to the Sigournays and that Dacre, whom we'd been searching for, was with him. I had the New York officers stationed around the Pine Street house, waiting, and we took them both, as you saw."

CHAPTER TWENTY

A MONTH later, Kipper lounged against the door frame of the harness-shop at Moreau & Abernathy's, chewing at a straw and looking at the changes that had taken place in the past weeks. The stables, the wagon sheds, the tool house were as new. The forge and farrier's shop had been rebuilt, were shining with paint and ringing with the sounds of work. The great ship-shaped wagons, stood in lines, their white covers gleaming in the spring sun. Horses were munching hay and stamping in their stalls—huge, broad-backed horses, capable of hauling mountains of freight.

"Looks mighty different," said Kipper. "Brisk and new—businesslike!"

"To think," said the old harness-maker, "of what it was like that day young Abernathy stopped to speak to me! And when I look at it now, I can't believe my own eyes." The man had a length of linen thread in his hand and was drawing it along a nubbin of wax as he talked. "It may sound foolish to you, but when I first saw that young man I felt maybe something different was coming. He had the look of it."

Kipper had been moving through the countinghouse; he'd stood on the wharves and watched the square-rigged ships of the firm, some of them newly arrived, some newly laden.

"A new hand," he said to the old harnessmaker now. "A new way of looking at things. It jumps right up at you wherever you turn."

"And see the two of them there," said the old man, and pointed through his open window. Denis Abernathy and Lois were standing some little distance away, she as lovely and as fresh as the young season, and he proud and strong-looking and confident as he looked at the big teams and pointed out their quality to her. "Do you see how she listens to him? Do you see the look in her face? Mark me, the house, as times go on, will not be separated as it has been, these past years. This young pair will see to that; they will make one thing of it—and a fine, prosperous, honest thing it will be."

And Kipper, as he stood with his beaver hat tilted at an angle on his head, the toe of one of his half-boots prodding at the door sill, said nothing; but it was evident from the way he nodded his head that his ideas were pretty much the same.

THE END



The famous inventor of the amazing Bacular Clock makes an even more soul-shaking discovery.

Pat Pending's

THINGS were pretty quiet around Ben Franklin's town on that Saturday. The stuff we're not permitted to discuss was soft and pleasant and warm; the news from overseas was as encouraging as a weight-machine horoscope; and lines of autos formed the last rows of summer as every car-owner with an "A" ticket to squander wandered hither and yon in search of a bit of country air.

All but me, of course. Being a minion in your Uncle Samuel's civil service, I was tied to the mahogany until five o'clock. So I was sitting there in my office, reading a thud-and-blunder adventure story, when there came a gentle *tap-tap* on the door.

"Yeah?" I invited. "Come in!"

The door opened, and in slipped the smoothest sample of femininity this side of Beverly Hills. She was dressed in a blue uniform, a Sam Browne belt, a perky little forage cap, and a winsome smile. She snapped to a pulse-tingling salute, and asked:

"Is this the United States Patent Office?"

"That," I agreed, "or a reasonable facsimile. We've recently transferred from Washington. Sit down, Captain—"

"And are you," she demanded, "Donald Mallory?"

I nodded. "Guilty as charged, Major. But let's not talk about me; let's sweeten the subject. Are you a W.A.A.C. or a W.A.V.E.? And is there any law against—"

"I'm a W.U.," she said severely.

"Western Union? to you. Sign here!"

And she shoved a yellow flimsy into my flabbergasted paws. I grinned feebly and said, "Oh, well—" and ripped it open.

An instant later, however, I loosed a tremendous yell. For what the message said was:

PLEASE FOLLOW MESSENGER TO MY PRIVACEOUS LABORATORY IMMEDIATELY. HURRY. VITICALLY IMPORTULANT.

It was signed—*Pat Pending!*

Now, if you don't think I had a reason to get excited, guess again! This "Pat Pending" was a big red-headed buck-toothed gawk with a face like the map of Eire, who had stalked into my office a couple of months ago, modestly acknowledging himself the "greatest inventor of all time."

I had, of course, derided this claim—despite his reasonable contention that almost every mechanical appliance in the office bore his name: "*Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.—Pat Pending*"—until,

in a crisis, he had proven his right to the title.

His "bacular clock," a fantastic little gadget which made Time move backward, had prevented a train-wreck, saving the lives of hundreds of brave young American soldiers. But after performing this scientific miracle, Pat had disappeared into thin air. For weeks I had searched Philadelphia, but had found no trace of him. And now—

I clutched the messenger-girl's arm feverishly.

"Where did you get this?" I howled. "Where is he?"

She hooked her thumbs in her belt and evaded primly, "That, Mr. Mallory, I am not permitted to tell you. However, I can take you to him—"

"Then," I demanded, "what are we hanging around here for? Let's get going!" I grabbed my hat, shoved her out the door, and locked up the office. I tried once more in the elevator. "Where are we going? How long will it take to get there?"

But my charming companion still wasn't talking. She just smiled and said: "I'm sorry, sir. I'm not permitted to tell you. Will you call a taxi, please?"

"I'll call a sphinx," I complained, "and have a nice chatty conversation.



Periscoop by NELSON BOND

Why all the secrecy? Has that double-talking wingding hidden a *corpus delicti* somewhere?"

"Western Union," she sniffed, "does not pry into its clients' affairs. The customer is always right."

"Would you," I asked her moodily, "care to make book on that?"

But she made no reply, and I obediently called a taxi.

So after all that build-up, we traveled to Eastridge, a suburb of Philly we could have reached in half the time and at one-twentieth the expense by El, had it not been for my inventorial friend's Ellery Queenish instructions.

We turned east toward the river on Orthodox Street, twisted through a labyrinth of short blind alleys, and ended up finally before a two-story red-brick-row house, typically Philadelphian in style and somnolence. Here, as I subsidized the cabby's Old Age fund, my companion tormented the doorbell with a series of mysteriously intricate dots and dashes.

A MOMENT later the door inched ajar, and before us stood the great Pat Pending himself, big as life and twice as incredible. His eyes brightened as he saw me; he beckoned to us frantically.

"Come in!" he cried hoarsely. "Oh, as speedaceously as possible—come in!" Then, when we had slipped in to join him in a dark and narrow vestibule: "Thank goodness you came in time! I was afraid you wouldn't make it. Did you bring a form, Mr. Malloy?"

"Form?" I repeated dazedly.

"Why, yes—an applicaceous form for me to patent my new inventulation." He stared at me haggardly. "Don't tell me you didn't bring one?"

"All I brought," I told him bluntly, "was myself and my curiosity. And Molly Pitcher, here—"

"The name," said the messenger-girl with bitter-sweet icing on her voice, "is Ross. Susan Ross. Miss Ross, to you!"

I ignored her.

"She didn't say anything about a patent application. What's this about a new invention? And why all the hush-hush? And how come the disappearing act?"

Susan Ross interrupted curtly: "While he ponders the sixty-four-dollar question, will somebody please pay me? I've got to get back to the office."

"Don't look at me," I snorted. "I'm a stranger here myself. I've already been nicked for taxi-fare."

But Pending said anxiously: "Oh, gracious—no, no! You mustn't leave, Miss Ross. You're *supposed* to be here. Let's see, now—what time is it? Three-thirty-eight? Good! They'll be here in two minutes. We've no time to waste. Miss Ross, go into the living-room. Mallory, go up and conceal yourself at the head of the stairs. Have you got your club?"

I stared at him wildly.

"Club! Conceal myself at—oh-oh! I was afraid of something like this! Miss Ross, see if there's a telephone in the living-room, will you? Pat, sit down and rest awhile. I'll make you a nice cold compress—"

And I headed for the bathroom upstairs for a sopping washcloth. But scarcely had I reached the head of the staircase when there sounded from the floor below a woman's scream, the shatter of breaking glass, and the scrape of heavy footsteps.

And then:

"That's the man!" cried a guttural voice, thick with a Teutonic accent. "Seize him! And the woman too!"

With a gasp I dropped to my knees, concealing myself behind the heavy old-fashioned balustrade which shielded the stairwell. Peering between the two uprights, I risked a swift gander below. In the hallway three men, of

race and purpose unmistakable, held Susan and Pat at the point of a gun!

Now, I suppose maybe I could get away with denying I was scared. But this is a true story, so I'll break down and confess that the cold stuff running down my manly brow *wasn't* spring showers, and the tightening sensation around my ticker *wasn't* indigestion. Further, deponent admitteth not—except that my hands were shaking so bad that I rattled one baluster plumb out of its dovetail joint!

The creak of yielding wood sounded like an explosion to me, but apparently it went unnoticed below, where the boss intruder was swinging into action.

"You are Pending, *nein*?" he grated. "Well, where is it, *your* invention?"

Pat bridled indignantly. "Invention! You think I'm going to tell you where it is, you dictaceous vandalizer? Never!"

One of the squareheads said, "Shall I make him talk, Otto?" and hunched

Otto charged me, I whirled and let him have it smack on the button.

toward Pat threateningly. But the leader halted him.

"No, not yet. Wait until we have found the machine. Then we will make him explain its operation. Fritz, you look in the back of the house. You, Karl, search upstairs."

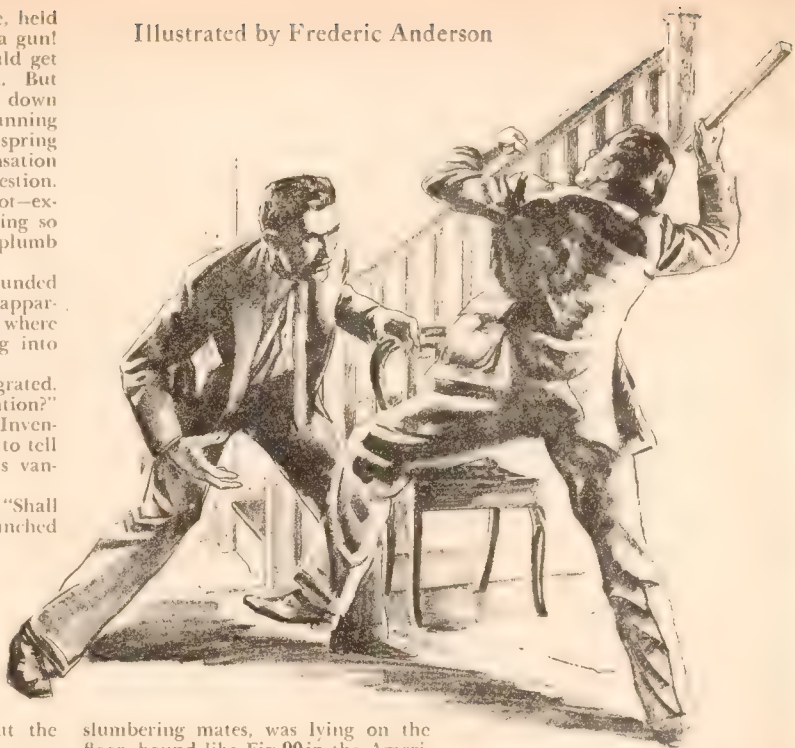
Upstairs! I swallowed hard on a wad of cotton which turned out to be my tongue. The footsteps of Fritz faded off to the back of the house; those of Karl began climbing toward where I crouched. . . .

What I did then was not bravery, but sheer instinct. As I turned to scuttle away, the broken baluster ripped loose in my hand with a grating squeak. Karl looked up, opened his mouth to shout a warning. There was but one thing to do—so I did it. I dived headlong over the railing, and caught Karl in a flying tackle. Wrapped together like toasted marshmallows, we stukaed down the staircase.

I landed on top, which was lucky. Otto bellowed and charged me, which wasn't—for him. For I still clutched that chunk of timber. I whirled and let him have it smack on the button, with a meaty *thump!*—and the Bundsman bigshot went by-by.

This left only Fritz to be reckoned with, and Fritz obliged by galloping back into our midst with nothing on his mind but hair. Pat and I, now armed with our adversaries' automatics, caught him with his panzers down. A moment later he, like his

Illustrated by Frederic Anderson



slumbering mates, was lying on the floor, bound like Fig. 90 in the American Red Cross First Aid Manual.

It was then that Pat Pending turned to me, chuckling gleefully.

"See? Just as I told you! It's a good thing you went upstairs!"

Susan Ross stared at us both bleakly. "What goes on here?" she bleated. "Is he kidding?"

I shook my head.

"Pending is often funny," I assured her, "but never intentionally so. Pat—you *knew* this was going to happen?"

"Why, yes. Of course I knew—"

"And you also knew that Miss Ross and I were going to be in the house when it happened! You even knew where we were going to be standing?"

"But naturally! It was inevitable."

I CLEARED the goose-pimples out of my larynx and put the next question in as calm and level a voice as I could manage.

"How did you know these things, Pat?"

And Pat smiled beatifically.

"How?" he repeated. "How? Why, because I *saw* them happen, of course. Yesterday afternoon. Through my new invention—the periscope!"

"You saw—" I gasped. But the Western Union lassie muscled in.

"You mean periscope, don't you, Mr. Pending?"

"Scoop," repeated Pending doggedly. "A periscope is an instrument

which shows what's going on at a certain place at a certain time. My periscope shows what is going to happen at any given spot—twenty-four hours later!"

"Look," said Susan Ross suddenly, "if you two will excuse me? I—I just remembered—I've got to see a doc about a manacle. So if you don't mind—"

"Easy does it," I admonished her. "I don't know what this is all about myself, but if Pat Pending says his peri will scoop—it *will* scoop! Pat, suppose you explain?"

"Why," said my friend with the air-cooled incisors, "it's really very simple. As Sir James Jeans has said, Time is like a gigantic mural painted on a wall which embraces all Space. Man is a fly caught in the folds of a brush sweeping this mural; he has *memory* of that over which he has passed, *cognizance* of that which lies immediately beneath him—but he cannot foresee the future, because it has not yet been revealed to him.

"Yet that future exists, as real and constant as any other part of the mural. It is static and irrevocable."

"And—and your periscope—"

"Enables me," cried Pat triumphantly, "to rise above the mural and see into the future!"

I said sternly: "Wait a minute, pal! That doesn't gee with what you told me when you invented the barular

clock! You said Time was like a stream of water coursing between the river-banks of Space—

"That was wrong," confessed Pending. "My theory was erronular. But this time I am right. Would you like to see for yourselves? Very well. Look!"

He scampered into another room, returned in a moment with something which looked astonishingly like a mariner's telescope. Except for slight differences: The tube of this 'scope had a peculiar twist halfway along its length, and to its eyepiece was attached a strange little dial something like the control vernier of a radio.

Pending said: "What would you like to see? Yourself twenty-four hours from now? Someone you know? Tomorrow's session of Congress?"

"Earn while you learn is my motto," I told him. "If it's all the same to you, make it Pimlico racetrack."

"Very well," said Pat Pending. "Pimlico it is."

He fidgeted briefly with the dial, sighted through his periscope, smiled happily, and handed it to me. I stared, gulped—then almost dropped the instrument in my excitement.

ACCORDING to all recognized laws of optical physics, I should have been looking at the slightly magnified wall of a Philadelphia dwelling. Instead, I was witnessing the finale of a race at Pimlico track!

There was no possibility of error. I had spent too many hours and too many bucks at that hay-burners' playground not to recognize it. The crowds, the stands, the judges' booth, were all as I remembered them. The mutual board was brightly ashine with the names of the fourth-race entries and their odds. To cap the climax, I recognized the silks of the jockey who, even now, bat flailing like a band-leader's baton, was urging his mount down the stretch to a three-length victory. Brown on gold were the colors. The Whitcombe stables! I glanced at the betting-board swiftly and noted with heightening excitement that Tinker's Dam, the Whitcombe entry, was rated at a cool 12-1. A few more seconds, and Tinker's Dam breezed past the wire a winner!

I guess I must have yelled aloud in my excitement, for the girl cried: "What is it? Let me see, too!"

"It's all yours, baby!" I cried happily, tossing her the periscope. "Take a look at those pay-off windows and see if you can find me anywhere in the crush. Because as sure as gobs make little green maidens, that's where I'm going to be this time tomorrow. Pat."—I turned to my friend exuberantly—"you've done it again. This time you've really hit the jackpot. . . . And I do mean jack!"

Pat grinned a toothy grin of bashful pleasure.

"Y-you like my inventulation?"

"Like it!" I chortled. "It and me are bosom pals, beginning immediately. Why, man, that's the greatest thing ever discovered! Imagine being able to see twenty-four hours into the future! What a clean-up a guy can make! Horse-races—advance tips on the stock market—football results—"

"And," interrupted a roughly grating voice behind me, "the outcome of military efforts. Raise your hands, *bitte!* One move, and I shoot to kill!"

Dazedly I turned, my hands groping skyward like those of my companions. A newcomer stood in the doorway, a hulking, broad-shouldered, beetle-browed brute of a man with merciless ice-blue eyes.

"There!" he grunted. "That is better. You *verdammt* Yankees are fools. Did you think I would not investigate when three of my comrades failed to return from their mission? You, woman! Give me that glass!"

He seized the periscope from Susan's hand. Backing watchfully away, he bent and cut the bonds which secured his companions. For a few moments the air was rancid with the gutturals, sibilants, and expletives of the (alleged) "Master Race's" tongue—and what he said to his aides must not have been particularly flattering, for their features flushed and they shuffled uncomfortably.

Then the espionage-agent turned again to us.

"Yes," he sneered, "you Americans are fools. By chance you stumble across a magnificent military weapon, and immediately think of diverting its use to your own private financial ends. But *we* will make no such mistake! Our Fuehrer shall use this device to foresee the results of his brilliant strategy. By remote control we shall sit in on your most secret conferences, watch the movements of your troops and convoys, anticipate your puny air-raids—"

He laughed again triumphantly. "*Ja*, that is what we will do. Now, you, Herr Pending—demonstrate to me how this operates."

I cried swiftly: "Don't do it, Pat! Don't show him a damn' thing."

And the girl cried: "Break it, Mr. Pending! Break it into a million pieces."

But Pat's usually ruddy face had paled to a bistre hue. His eyes were clouded as with fearful thought. To my astonishment and dismay, he stepped forward meekly, obediently.

"Well, sir," he whined, "it works like this—"

"Pat!" I cried again. "You're not going to—"

"Quiet!" commanded the Nazi.

"You set this little dial," explained Pat servilely, "for the spot you wish

to see. It's calculated by latitude and longitude."

"*Gut!*" grunted the German. "Go on. Demonstrate. Show me a scene. A military scene."

Pat hesitated briefly. "Our—our American forces?" he suggested. "You would like to see their latest move in the Pacific?"

The Nazi nodded. "Yes, that will do. Of course we will not give the secret of this weapon to our Japanese allies. We are not so foolish as to trust even comrades-in-arms with a device of such military importance. But if we can help them destroy your miserable Navy, we help ourselves. Show me."

Pat said nervously: "Well—here's something that might be of interest. I was looking yesterday at the little island of Talu, in the Aleutians, where American marines are planning a foray. We can watch the result of their raid—"

"Pat!" I bellowed. "Pat, you Benedict Arnold! This is treachery! You can't help—"

"Silence!" warned the Nazi. "Your friend is a clever man. He realizes it is useless to combat our superior might and wisdom. Show me tomorrow's scene on this little island of Talu, Herr Pending."

So as I stood there, bitter and helpless, Pat made the necessary adjustments on his instrument, mildly passed it to our captor. The German raised the periscope to his eyes, stared through it long and avidly, and an exclamation of rage burst from his lips.

"*Ja!* Then you *did* speak the truth!"

"Wh-what is it?" I croaked. "What do you see?"

The Nazi snarled: "You would see for yourself? Look then."

He handed me the tube. I stared through it, and darned near cheered out loud! For what I beheld was a joyous spectacle.

THROUGH some incalculable factor in the setting of the verniers, it was as though I hung suspended in mid-air, looking down through writhing tendrils of fog upon a tiny crag lashed by the cold gray waters of the north Pacific. As Pending had said, an invasion was in progress at this outpost. A swarm of naval craft—cruisers, destroyers, an aircraft-carrier, countless scores of transport barges—were huddled in the rocky harbor. The rock-strewn island was seething with soldiers in khaki hurriedly establishing a foothold on the outpost.

I needed to be no military expert to read meaning into that scene. One glance at the flags was enough. The American North Pacific Army had moved at last to take back from the Japs their lost Aleutian possessions.

This first move toward reclamation of our farthest eastern territory had been done secretly, swiftly, magnificently. Apparently catching the enemy utterly unprepared! Because—

Well, a gander at the beach indicated that. There *had* been Japs on Talu, no doubt. But no more. That which had been their encampment was now a charnel-house of death and destruction. The dead lay heaped in windrows past which our soldiers marched with heads averted.

THE Nazi wrenched the instrument from my grasp and placed it once more to his own eye.

"So your forces plan an invasion, eh? They think to slaughter our courageous allies like sheep. But this will never come to pass! And do you know why?" He patted the periscope affectionately. "Because I, Eric von Bummschnell, have seen and anticipated tomorrow's action through this device. I will change all this!" He turned to one of his cohorts. "What is today? The 28th?"

"Ja, mein Oberst."

"As I thought. Very well. Return to our sending station and dispatch the following message to the Japanese Imperial Command. You know how to reach them." He thought swiftly, then dictated: "Heavy concentration enemy troops occupying Talu Island base, August 29th. You have that?"

"Yes sir."

"Good! Get it off immediately. And now—" He turned to us as his underling hurried from the room. "Let us wait and test the accuracy of your instrument. When we have proven its value—"

"Then?" asked Pat Pending.

The Nazi shrugged negligently. "Then I will need you no longer, having learned how to use your machine. Tie them up. We have a day of tedious waiting before us."

Well, they trussed us up like Venus in a girdle-shop window, and caged us in a small upstairs bedroom. If you think it was fun, you're nuts. What I liked least about it was that they dumped me so I was lying shoulder to shoulder with Pat Pending. When I thought of what he had done, my flesh stood up and crawled around on all fours at being thus placed in intimate contact with him.

Looking back on it, I'd love to be able to say I wriggled and squirmed around, heaving my manly buzzom and flexing my biceps and gnawing ten or twelve yards of hemp until I finally succeeded in liberating myself and my companions. But the fact is, nothing-like that happened. Those tricks are pulled only in story-books. Wrap yourself in a rope cocoon sometime, and see what I mean. The net result of my puffings and slatherings was that I scraped my wrists red, white

and bruised, and succeeded only in flopping myself over onto my stomach, a most uncomfortable position.

So several dreary hours ticked by, and as dusk gathered, it got darker and darker in the room. And along about nine P.M.—time estimated by courtesy of Mallory's Interior Clock, M.T.—footsteps clumped up the stairs, the light-switch clicked on, and pal Eric appeared in our boudoir to tuck us into bed with a good-night hiss.

He had the periscope with him. He took the gags out of our mouths and settled down to a strained interlude of plain and fancy gloating.

"Well, my friends," he said with the cordiality of a scorpion devouring its young, "it will not be long now, eh?"

"You mean before the United Nations lay that paper-hanging Phooey of yours back under the rock he crawled out from under?" I asked. "That's right. It won't be long."

"Silence!" he snarled. "You will pay for that remark later. I mean it will not be long now before my cleverness spikes your stupid occupation attempt on Talu Island."

Pending said: "What time is it?"

"A little after nine. Why?"

"Oh, nothing," said Pat. "Just conjecturing."

"I came up here," said the German, "to learn more about the operation of this instrument. I have been experimenting with it, and find it most fascinating. But so far I have been unable to determine *how* it works. You will tell me."

"Why—" began Pat.

"Heell!" I spat.

"Why, it's really very simple," said Pending. "Its motulation is based on the constancy of tempo. An electricaceous magnitudinal disrupturizes the dimensural controversive, creating a hyperstacity of scopables. . . . You see?"

"Er—somewhat," replied the German guardedly, his forehead like a corrugated washboard. "Go on."

"When the verniers are estabulized in adajacular co-ordibles," continued Pending, "the flexual abstracting of Time is accentuized, enabling the user to visulate what will happen twenty-four hours later!"

The Nazi fidgeted, and I stifled a grin. This was one hurdle he couldn't overcome. On all other subjects Pat Pending could, and did, speak with the utmost fluency—but concerning his own "inventulations" his verbiage was as hard to untangle as chewing-gum in an angora sweater.

Herr Oberst von Bummschnell was licked, but he wouldn't admit it. He said heavily: "Well, it does not matter. Our scientists will soon understand its method of operation. But there is one mechanical function I have not been able to perform. I know how to set the latitudinal and

longitudinal verniers in order to see any specified place. I have already had the pleasure of watching a secret war council in your nation's capital, studied working conditions in a Polish concentration-camp, and have revisited by remote control our beautiful Berlin—"

"Being bombed again tonight, I hope?" I asked him.

He scowled at me, perhaps significantly, and continued: "But I do not know how to locate that spot in Space-Time where an—er—*individual* may be found twenty-four hours hence. That is to say, an individual whose next movements are not definitely predictable."

"You mean," asked Pat blandly, "yourself? You'd like to see what you're going to be doing this time tomorrow?"

"You will understand," bridled the German, "it is not conceit which prompts this curiosity, but a simple desire to know—"

"Of course," said Pat. "What time is it? Quarter after? Yes, I guess we still have time."

"Time? What do you mean? Time for what?"

"Oh, nothing," said Pending soothingly. "Here, I'll show you: You adjust this variable to coordinate with the *present* location and turn the dial slowly one complete revolution—" He twisted the gadgets named as he spoke, and returned the periscope to its new owner. "There you are," he said. "Now look through it, and you'll see what you'll be doing this time tomorrow."

"Ach, so?" said the German, gratified. He raised the instrument to his eyes. . . .

Then almost dropped it on the floor. His face paled dangerously, and his voice broke in a cry, whether of anger or something else is hard to say. "You—you—what is this? A joke? You dare—"

HE stopped abruptly, whirling toward the door. For the quiet of our refuge had been rudely, suddenly shattered. Cars screeched to a stop in front of the house; there came the sound of racing footsteps, then robust hammering on the front door. Angry voices, many of them, lifted in strident challenge.

"Open up here! Open up in the name of the law!"

"Polizei!" rasped the spy. His eyes darted malice at us. "So somehow you informed them! But you will not live to tell—"

Pending said calmly, reasonably: "Try that window, Herr Heel. I think that's where it's supposed to happen."

"What? Window? Ach, yes—to the alley below I can still escape—"

Thoughts of vengeance forgotten, the German raced to the window,

threw it open, climbed to its sill. His heavy form lingered there, outlined briefly against the dim twilight. It must have made a tempting target for those who had taken their posts behind the house. From the alleyway came a single, explosive crack—and with a tiny gurgling cry Von Bummschmell pitched headforemost through the opening.

"Well!" said Pat Pending contentedly. "What do you think! Just as I saw it happen. They'll be here to free us in a minute."

"Free us?" I shouted wildly. "But—but why did the police come here at all? Who called them?"

"Western Union," grinned Pat. "When Miss Ross didn't return from her assignment. The taxi-driver put them on the trail. That's why *she* had to remain, you know. Oh, goodness, yes! It was most necessitous!"

AFTER the police had hauled away to justice the Nazi agents, and there remained only the three of us in Pending's little dwelling, I suddenly remembered something.

"Oh, Lord!" I groaned. "Talu Island! I almost forgot! Quick, Pat! We must call the War Department and warn them to call off the invasion attempt before our soldiers are slaughtered."

"Our soldiers," repeated Pat curiously, "slaughtered?"

"Yes. Those bombers the Nazi sent for." I groaned again as a second thought struck me. "Pat! Maybe we can't stop it! Maybe, as you said, Time is a mural, and that which is painted upon it is inexorable!"

"That's right," said Pat agreeably. "It is. But I wouldn't worry too much about that bombing-raid if I were you. It's all finished."

"All fin—" I stared at him.

Susan Ross gasped: "What? Oh, Mr. Pending, how awful! Our brave young soldiers—"

"Our soldiers?" repeated Pat curiously. "Oh, but it wasn't our soldiers. It was the Japs who were bombed."

"J-Japs?" I faltered. "Bombed?"

"But of course. Don't you understand? No, apparently not. Well, listen, then:

Early this morning, as I was experimenting with my new inventulation, I chanced to turn it upon Talu Island. I saw two things there. First, that an American landing-party was on its way to occupy the island—and second, that Talu was already occupied by a heavy concentration of Japanese troops.

"It was obvious that our boys were moving right into a terrible trap. Their insufficient numbers could not hope to oppose successfully the land-based Jap fighters. There was no time to call up American reinforcements or order a bombing expedition from far-away Dutch Harbor. There was, in fact, only one command near enough the scene of action to bring up a bomb squadron. That was—the Japanese Command.

"But I, of course, had no way of getting in touch with the Nippos. That's why I deliberately let word leak out to people I suspected were German sympathizers that I had invented a new military weapon. And that's why I sent for you through Miss Ross."

"Why," puzzled the girl, "did you drag us into it?"

"Why, you *had* to be in it! I had watched my own activities for the next day, and knew you two were involved."

"Go on, Pat," I ordered. "I'm beginning to see the light—dimly. You

knew we were slated to play rôles in your private life drama. You knew the Nazis would capture us, and get captured themselves. But why this business of calling up a Jap raiding-party?"

"Well, consider what happened," smiled Pat. "It all worked out as I had planned. Von Bummschmell, capturing us on schedule and looking through the periscope, saw a victorious American landing-party marching onto Talu Island. He watched this scene happening on the 28th—which meant it was actually to happen on the 29th.

"So, as I had hoped, he dispatched a message to the Japs, advising them that American troops held Talu Island on the 29th. In that fog-veiled country their high-flying aircraft could tell no different, and they had no reason to doubt the information of a friendly agent. So they sent over bombers and—and raining death on the island—they destroyed their own men!"

"Destroyed their own—" There it was again. "But Pat, it doesn't make sense! You've just finished saying that this air raid was not supposed to take place until *tomorrow*!"

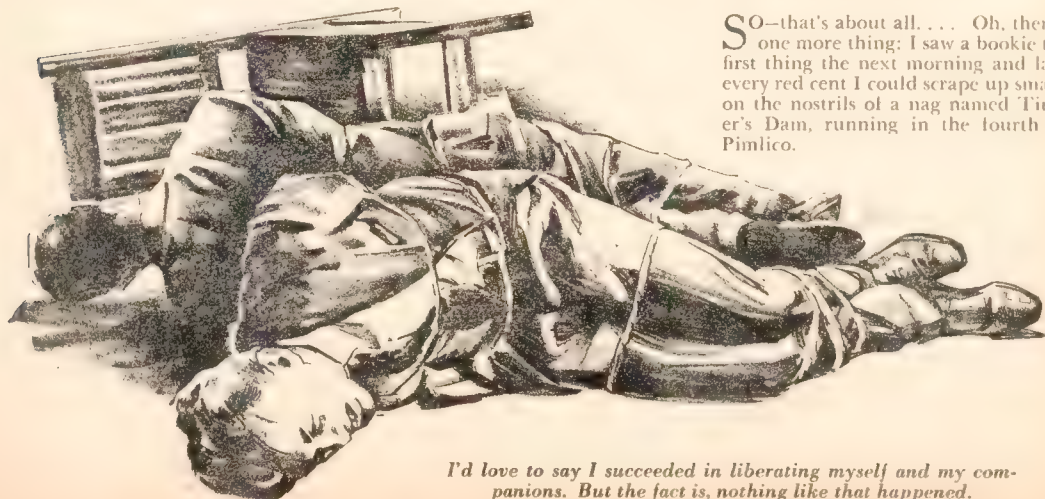
Pat grinned complacently.

"That's the mistake Von Bummschmell made. The one I had hoped he would make. No, Mallory—when the Jap Air Force received his message, they didn't wait twenty-four hours to strike. They struck *immediately*! Because, you see his wire said the Americans occupied Talu on the 29th—"

"And—" prodded Susan Ross.

"And out *there*," continued Pending triumphantly, "it was already the 29th. At the farthestmost tip of the Aleutians it was already—tomorrow! Because Talu Island is across the International Date Line!"

SO—that's about all. . . . Oh, there's one more thing: I saw a bookie the first thing the next morning and laid every red cent I could scrape up smack on the nostrils of a nag named Tinker's Dam, running in the fourth at Pimlico.



I'd love to say I succeeded in liberating myself and my companions. But the fact is, nothing like that happened.

Tinker's Dam led at the quarter, the half, the turn, and all the way down the stretch. He romped across the pay-off wire three lengths in front of the next best plug. Which was exactly as I had seen it in Pat's periscope.

So I should turn handsprings? The only thing that periscope had *not* told me was that Tinker's Dam had fouled two other gee-gees in the giddy-up. So of course he was ruled out, his victory was canceled, and my bank roll—

Oh, hell! Everything happens to me!

So I went to Pending.

I said: "All right, bud—give with the glass. Peeping Don's got to recoup somehow."

But my redheaded friend shook his head.

"No, Mallory," he denied. "I'm sorry, but—no more. I'm not even applying for a patent on this invention. I'm giving it to the War Department."

That's when my screams tortured the ears of the gods on high Olympus. But now, thinking back on it, I'm not so sorry after all. Maybe Pat was right. Maybe a guy's just as well off *not* messing around with an instrument that can look into the future.

Because, man being a curious animal as he is, it just stands to reason that sooner or later the user would want to turn the periscope on himself, and watch his own activities throughout a following day. And if in that period something should happen—

That's the thought that struck me. And that's why I reconsidered and stopped demanding another squint through the magic mirror. Because I suddenly remembered Von Bumm-schnell, and the look on his face when he saw himself twenty-four hours after he pitched through that window—dead.

I wonder just what he saw?

A NEW TYPE OF CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Edited by Albert H. Morehead

Here we have a crossword puzzle that offers a challenge to the imagination rather than a strain on the vocabulary. That is

to say, the difficulty is not in the words themselves, but in the definitions. The main types used are the anagram, the enigma, the

hidden word and for variety and to keep you guessing—some straight dictionary definitions. (Solution on page 123.)

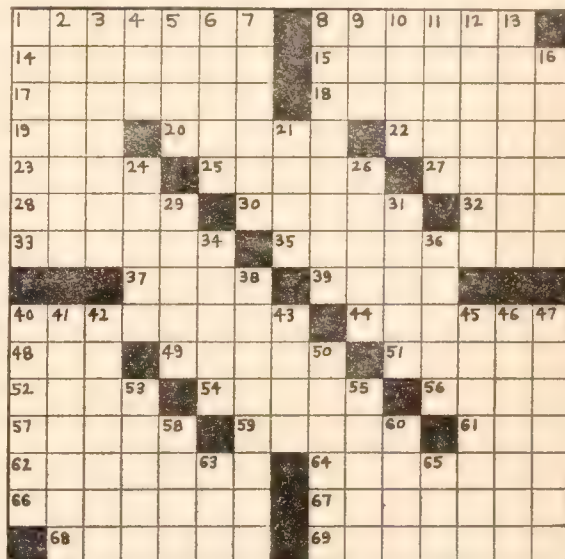
ACROSS

- 1 Policeman is in the grove
- 8 As boss he arranges the voices
- 14 Camouflaged, he flies to Nova Scotia via Toronto
- 15 All used for intimates
- 17 Denver's the place for salesmen
- 18 Peas rot lying around the docks
- 19 The end bore out his quirk
- 20 $2\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. weekly of steam
- 22 Our spirit for ever: V
- 23 Clock's face turned around and set down
- 25 Trips made for plunder
- 27 The horse ran around nothing flat
- 28 They fill their jugs in the Weser
- 50 Zero drops from the skies in these regions
- 52 The Spanish one opens unopened
- 53 Sealer of a buyer's purpose
- 55 Rents canal from transcendentalists, the drillers remaining
- 57 The article in point would make one gasp
- 59 His confused end would stain the pool
- 60 The devil was finished and was hanging
- 64 Arrange a slide for the women
- 68 I left the iris, Mister
- 69 Voice which is noiseless in *Gray's Elegy*
- 51 When it takes to sea at last (in 1492) it brings back catnip
- 52 Rose dizzily, so rocks
- 54 Censors a letter, or it would return sealed

- 56 Hidden on the summit at opportune times
- 57 Alsab runs in a fundamental way
- 59 Signifies wealth
- 61 Head of the bank withdraws
- 62 $1/14$ " enters in, becomes like marble
- 64 Place us in the pill
- 66 Control lies between the administration and the Colonel's command
- 67 Fearful angel where a fool is a rusher-in
- 68 Trumpet call in dramas sounds like Mack of the movies
- 69 Roslyn essayed to hide her shrewdness

DOWN

- 1 A carper in a car is vile
- 2 O Vera, we are overcome
- 3 Little fingers in ink pies
- 4 Stuff for a rubber stamp
- 5 Piece in our time
- 6 Twenty centers run wild
- 7 Assorted arts in easy stages for a makeshift
- 8 The baby's set in the basin
- 9 You don't sound well; try a drink
- 10 Keep the Russian from enslavement
- 11 It's best to take change in purse
- 12 Having sent, found the USO door changed
- 13 Attendant in taverns
- 16 Those who take notes must break stones
- 21 "Where the saints have —"
- 24 Article lost from the parade led to the hanging



- 26 Tampering with a plane is subject to punishment
- 29 Inclined to take the ego out of the Latins
- 31 Thong, bent back, parts
- 31 Wound up dead
- 36 Aid in making an empire
- 38 Building an entente with 'em
- 40 Get a line on the weather
- 41 My fits of anger are illusions
- 42 Press agent has foresight plus
- 43 A lode will pay out slowly
- 51 Push in the El to create an interval
- 56 Iose tie made of satins?
- 57 Trench-diggers at the front a fool
- 58 Kicks back over the traces
- 59 It's an arrangement of silk
- 55 Starts to be a trap, turns out a tangle
- 58 Draw the last from Milne
- 60 Pocket battleship sunk in a Scottish river
- 63 Born to be featured in the society columns
- 65 Mr. Jap

LOCKING the door of my apartment something choked in my throat. I was locking the door on England, the England full of friends and memories and heartbreaks. . . .

It was late afternoon before the tender took us out into Liverpool harbor alongside the *Athenia*. Scattered on her two decks the tender carried dozens of kerchiefed and balloon skirted Slavic peasants. Most of their children were barefoot, ragged, dirty-faced urchins who scurried over the small vessel like so many brown animals. As we neared the *Athenia* the peasants filled the air with a strange gibberish, pointing excitedly at the big steamer.

Dozens of beautiful girls had their heads over the railings of the ship, watching us approach and transfer. They were, it turned out later, Texas girls, who had "done" Europe via Schiaparelli's and Mayfair. They were lined up so neatly on the decks above me I had a feeling I was looking at a set for a musical comedy. Presently, I thought, all these pretty girls would sing, and the decks on which they were perched would swing open, revealing a hero and a heroine. A peasant woman near me, still nursing her three-year-old, brought me back to reality.

It was dusk when we sailed. Liverpool lay behind us, veiled in darkness and the English mist. Most of her lights were out. We slipped noiselessly out of coastal waters, decks dark and portholes closed against the light. From the shore the ship must have looked like a huge animal, moving stealthily on the water, gliding silently into night.

My cabin was first class, not out of choice. It was all they had. It was the first time I had traveled first class on anything. The shiny fixtures on the washbowl, the extra glasses and the rug on the floor impressed me.

There were three bunks in our cabin. My cabin mates were a gray-haired dowager duchess, and her timid, scrawny niece, well over thirty surely, who wrote "spinster" after her name on official forms. The aunt I guessed would terrorize shop girls and bus drivers, but would believe that she was a living example of the democratic process because she took tea twice a year with her servants.

She was lying on her bunk with a wet compress on her forehead. A soft-spoken Scotch stewardess came in to make arrangements about baths, and being called in the mornings, and breakfast.

"I've crossed nearly twenty times," said the duchess, sighing. "I always have my breakfast in bed. It's so soothing. But I suppose this trip—" Her voice ended in a question mark.

Two On an Oar

A remarkable story of the first submarine attack of this war.

by **CATHLEEN SCHURR**

"It will be very difficult, madam," said the stewardess, rumbling the "r." "We are so overcrowded."

"Well," said the duchess finally. "I guess we all have to make our little sacrifices these days. I expect I'll have to get up for breakfast."

"Thank you," said the stewardess, retreating quickly.

The duchess drew a deep breath and turned her head toward the wall. Presently she turned to me.

"Are you British? Do you know England well?" she asked. "Forgive my asking. I think it is always best to know about the people one travels with."

I said I was an American citizen and that I had lived and worked in England for nearly three years.

"Ah, England!" her voice had a lilt to it. "I know every inch of it. I'm Canadian, but England is my spiritual home, of course. We all feel that way, we British. I don't suppose you have that feeling, being American."

I wasn't sure what she meant, so I let it go. I couldn't have answered anyway because she was still talking.

ICAN'T remember how I met him, or how it was I came to be taking brandy with him in the lounge after dinner that night. He was the ship's surgeon, a Scotsman. He wore his uniform with a jaunty, arrogant air.

"It's a good lot being ship's surgeon," he said. "Meet interesting people. And good-looking girls."

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"By the way," I asked, "what about the trouble out here?"

"Oh, that. Well, I don't know. . . . You never can tell."

"But—no war's been declared."

"No, no war. They don't seem to declare war nowadays—first."

The announcement of it came next morning before lunch. A brief typewritten notice on the bulletin board said that a state of war existed between His Majesty's Government and the German Reich. All blackout orders would be strictly enforced. Lights of any kind, cigarettes or matches even, were not allowed on deck at night. There were no orders to keep lifebelts in sight. That morning, Sunday, September 3rd, 1939, there would be a lifeboat drill.

The crowd in front of the bulletin stared at it mutely for a moment. Then they broke away and subdivided into smaller groups, scattering in silence except for an occasional child begging loudly to be told what everyone was looking at.

After the lifeboat drill we went up to the top sports deck. There were two young men, Americans from the Liverpool office of the steamship company, who had been transferred home only a few hours before the *Athenia* sailed, standing at the railing with me.

It was a clear sunny day with the water blue and fresh and sparkling. Land was left behind. I gripped the railing and stared out at the horizon.

"A penny," said the first young man.

"How far can a submarine travel without having to return to base to refuel?"

He looked at me.

"I was thinking the same thing," he said.

"In another ten hours," said the second, "we'll be too far out for them to get us."

"They wouldn't've had a chance to get started this quickly, would they?" I asked. "After all, war was only declared a few hours ago."

They looked back over the water. The three of us moved away and started walking around the deck.

"Let's hope you're right," said the first.

"Yeah. Let's hope you're right," the other added.

I dressed carefully that night.

"Now then," I said, looking at myself in the mirror. "Go up and enjoy yourself. To hell with Hitler."

AT the next table someone was toasting the King. I heard an officer say that in another day we should be clear of the danger zone.

At that instant came a tremendous crash. The lights went out in the same split second. The noise of the explosion was like the slamming of

a huge steel bank vault door, magnified a thousand times. Dishes crashed to the floor, glasses and silverware banged off the tables. I felt the ship lurch under my feet, and my soup slopped over onto my lap. I felt the gilt band on the doctor's sleeve slip out from under my hand. I called to him. I never saw him again.

Women were screaming and I could feel people moving all around me, stumbling toward the stairway. Somehow I rounded the tables and reached the first steps shoulder to shoulder with the rest. We moved upward slowly, while here and there match flares of light broke the blackness for an instant.

The air was filled with a thick, acrid soot. I could feel it in my lungs. Out on deck I saw a huge cloud of black smoke hanging over the water. I noticed briefly and inconspicuously that the pingpong table on that deck was overturned. There was no one at my lifeboat station. I waited. No one came. Our lifeboat was still secure in its place.

I WENT back to the open part of the main deck. Most people had their deck chairs here. They were overturned now, with steamer rugs trailing aimlessly on the floor. A stewardess was collecting blankets to take back to the lifeboats. People were rushing helter-skelter in every direction at once. I looked across to the other side and saw a man staring into space in one chair. Someone covered his face. I realized then that he was dead.

The young man from the steamship office came up some steps and recognized me.

"A lifebelt," I whispered, in the din. "Have you got some?"

"Stay here," he yelled. "I'm going below."

"God—no!" I yelled too, this time. "Don't go below. You don't know how badly we're hit. We might be sinking fast." But he had already left me. I waited, the panic rising in me. It was still light. I could see some of the lifeboats being lowered, the screeching of rusting pulleys adding to the confusion. I couldn't stay there, standing still, any longer. My legs, almost without my willing them, raced back to my lifeboat station.

A stewardess was there now, handing out blankets. From the deck above a lifeboat was hanging, her cables taut, her keel only a few feet above the water. The cables at one end loosened suddenly, and the boat's prow dipped into the water. "We'll be swamped," came a cry. Then the stern cables tightened, leaving the boat suspended, nose down, her prow sloshing in the waves. As our boat swung out I could see other lifeboats crowded with frightened people, hanging in

mid-air, seemingly unable to move up or down.

"Cut the cables," yelled the officers. Only in the lifeboats very close to the water did they dare to do it.

Our lifeboat landed with a *plosh* on the water. There were about fifty in it. Straining, we watched the crew men loosen the cables. Underneath we felt the water moving and the boat sliding from the ship's side. I looked back and saw two women hanging helplessly to a rope ladder over the steamer's side.

"Pull away," cried someone in our boat. "Pull away, for Christ's sake!"

"Back water, damn ye," came another voice. That was the coxswain. His name was MacIntosh and he had a brogue to go with it. It took a while to be sure of what he was saying.

"Back water, damn ye!" he repeated, screaming. "We're only part full. Stay by to help."

"Oh, God, we'll go down with her." "Damn ye yellow-livered lubbers," Mac shouted. "There's hundreds still aboard."

"Why can't we go?" a wail from a woman.

"I'm giving the orders here," Mac shouted. "We're standing by to help."

We rowed near her stern and took a few passengers from other boats. All the *Athenia's* lower decks were under water. It seemed hours that we stayed there, never less than a few yards from her side. At any moment the big ship might turn turtle.

THE sun was gone and the sky was flecked with a few aimless gray clouds. A chill breeze was in the air. We were drifting a little further from the sinking ship.

"Can't we go now?" cried a man.

Mac looked over our heads at the *Athenia*. He spoke slowly, diffidently. "Oh . . . all right."

Rowing was difficult because the sea was choppy. The huge oars would dip down and as the boat crested a wave, miss the water altogether.

"We haven't enough men!" Mac cried. "We need two on an oar."

It wasn't bravery that made me volunteer. I was sitting closest to an oarlock. I crawled over onto the narrow slat seat, next to a steward, who had been rowing alone. My fingers were too short to grip the oar all the way round. I could feel the weight of it and, as I pulled, the futile push it made in the water.

The steward next to me was wearing a lifebelt. He was a young man. His name was Jack. He kept cursing to himself. Next to him, crumpled up in the bottom of the boat, there was a stoker who swore at Mac's orders.

"He's crazy," he cried. "Mac's crazy. He don't know nothing about running a lifeboat."

"Shut up," said a woman. A man near her was whimpering. "You too," she repeated.

Night came quickly and the sea seemed more restless. White-capped waves rolled up against us, their crowns glistening in the misty moonlight. A gasp rippled over our boat when a high wave slapped the side, nearly capsizing us. In the distance we could see the *Athenia*, a gigantic searchlight from her top deck sending a piercing shaft of light across the black waves. The rest of her hulk was lost in darkness. You couldn't tell how much of it was under water. It rained occasionally, a gentle aimless rain, more like mist. The only sounds were the swish of waves, the creak of oarlocks and the moans of the people.

"God damn Nazis," said Jack. "I've been on that ship sixteen years. I like that ship. Just you wait'll I get back to shore and can sign up again. I'll show them. It's the Navy for me, by God."

Mac stood up in the prow, shouting at us.

"Get this, now," he said. "There's no etiquette out here. No more parlor manners. If you need anything, shout for it. If you have to go, do it overboard. For the women, here's a bucket. Only for God's sake, to hell with manners. The pain'll kill you otherwise."

Most of us were retching violently from the motion of the boat.

"We've got rations," Mac went on. "We'll save them. May need them later. Now pull on those oars. Keep a sight of the *Athenia*. If rescue ships come, they'll come near her."

"I think the S.O.S. got through," Jack whispered.

"How do you know?" I wanted to ask. But I was afraid to.

RAFTS floated by. Once there was an overturned lifeboat. The children in our boat were quiet. A baby slept in his mother's arms. A refugee from Danzig was moaning on the floor, vomiting.

"Get that man behind an oar," Jack yelled. "We've got to have two on an oar to keep afloat."

They pushed him up again and he worked sullenly, his head hanging down. His wife, near me, looked over the water and said in German, "After all they have done—this too." Then she screamed suddenly, and turned around to be sick over the side. Her two kids just stared at her, quiet, patting her fat arms.

I felt someone tugging at my leg. I looked down. The niece from my cabin was huddled in the keel, her knees drawn up underneath her chin, her bony elbows close to her body.

"Did you—did you—see my aunt?" she asked.

"I—" I began.

I never had to finish the sentence. Over the water we heard a cry. "Have you . . . got a bucket? We're leaking fast. Can't get the sea cocks in place."

"Pull over," yelled Mac. My heart sank. How could we get near another lifeboat in that sea without crashing?

"Give them the bailer," Mac said. "Not the bucket. We need that ourselves. We'll take some of your people," he called.

It was too choppy to get many of them. Two children tumbled over the bow into our boat while the men held the boats together with their hands. A girl came in and huddled up on the seat.

"Come over here," a woman said to the girl. "Come close and get warm."

"Can't," said the girl. You could hear her teeth chatter. "Covered with oil. I'm a mess. I'm frozen too. It's a damned lie about grease and oil keeping you warm." She came closer, anyway. I could smell the oil. She could tell them back home she had been done in oil.

It was around two o'clock when Mac's helper, a kid named Seabiscuit, passed back rations. I bit into the hardtack. It tasted like dog biscuits.

"Anybody want a biscuit?" the kid said.

A man's hand reached up.

"Where? Where?" he cried.

A woman passed it over to him.

"Oh, God," he moaned. "Oh, God. I thought you said whisky."

The other lifeboats were releasing their red rocket flares. They looked like dud roman candles on the Fourth of July. Mac said no, we had to save ours—the other boats were crazy to waste them so early.

Hours passed. I lost count of time.

Lights were beginning to appear in the distance. We had drifted so far we could not be certain which came from the *Athenia*, and which were lights carried by other lifeboats.

Suddenly Jack grabbed my arm. "Look, there's one! They got the S.O.S. That's a rescue ship!"

"Sit still," Mac said. "Where? Oh that. That's just another lifeboat."

"No, there! Look! I know it's a rescue ship!" Jack insisted.

"I don't know," said Mac. "It's another false alarm."

"Let's make for it anyway. Come along now. Everyone, pull!"

"Oh, well," Mac mumbled. "Oh, well, all—right."

We worked in silence, all oars strained. This was the hardest part. Always the brightest lights seemed to be moving farther away.

Jack was sweating heavily. When we could finally make out the outline of several ships, he yelled, and let go the oar. The "Mae West" lifebelt he had worn all night, chafed against his

arms. He pulled it off and was ready to drop it overboard.

"What'll I do with it?"

I reached over and put it on. It was the first time I had on a lifebelt. It was as uncomfortable as it looked.

The first ship was a destroyer, big and gray and ugly.

"Careful," said Mac. "They might be Nazis."

We rounded her stern. A Norwegian flag hung from the mast. Sailors hallooed us to stop.

"We're going on," Mac yelled back, "to the next ship." He still didn't trust them, apparently.

The next ship was a huge white yacht, smooth and streamlined. She was the *Southern Cross*, the biggest yacht afloat, owned by Axel Wennergren, Swedish industrialist. We pulled alongside, back near the stern, waiting for another lifeboat to finish unloading up ahead.

Between us and the yacht there was a half swamped lifeboat. It still had six people in it. The waves carried us up against it.

Mac shouted feverishly, "Use your oars to push off sideways. Push away, for God's sake."

"Shall we jump?" cried someone in the sinking boat. Overhead, the yacht sailors had thrown lifelines to our boat to keep us steady in the swell.

"No! For Christ's sake, don't jump!" Mac yelled back. A man in our boat grabbed the line and tried to hoist his body up on it. The line tightened, drawing our boat almost on top of the other. A girl in its prow reached out to me and I put out a hand toward her. There was a scream behind me. I looked back. Our boat was balancing at a forty-five-degree angle on its side.

NEXT thing I knew, I was in the water. There were arms and legs and bodies swirling all around me. I pushed out, kicking violently, and came up alongside our boat. It had turned completely over. Mac was crawling on its keel, reaching out a hand to those in the water. A shower of lifebelts rained down from the *Southern Cross*. The current carried us away from them, quickly, and I remembered you were supposed to get off your shoes. I went down trying to undo the buckles. Someone grabbed me around the neck and I felt a woman's heavy breasts against my body. I cupped her chin and broke her stranglehold, going under with her. I reached out for her again, but the waves had carried her beyond me.

Another lifeboat had put out from the yacht. I treaded water and yelled, "Hey, wait for me," and a wave hit me in the face. I got next to the lifeboat somehow. Two huge arms reached over the side and lifted me completely out of the water. They

laid me inside the boat, a wriggling fish, wet and gasping. I crawled down to the prow, leaving room for the crew to work in. A young woman was picked up next. Then a man. He still had his legs over the edge when he saw a flash of white in the water. It was a baby. He grabbed it by its leg and pulled it in the boat.

The woman next to me jumped up. "I don't know where my boy is," she said quietly. "I'll take the baby." In her arms, the baby's cries dimmed. Other survivors were rescued. Another woman. She screamed when she saw the baby.

"That's my baby. Give me my baby!" The first woman gave him up, as quietly as she had taken him, staring in front of her. Suddenly across the water came a boy's voice. "Mummy! Mummy!"

"Geoffrey!" the first woman started. She looked over the edge for a moment, then stood up. Before anyone could stop her, she was overboard. We could hear her son crying to her, telling her where he was. He had surrounded himself with lifebelts and was treading water with all the strength his pair of twelve-year-old legs could muster. She found him, and they came back together. Neither had had a lifebelt.

It was almost light by the time the yacht lifeboat put back. Less than two-thirds of our original load had been picked up. The Danzig woman's two children were missing and so was Seabiscuit. I never again saw the niece who had been in my cabin. Another man, badly mangled, had lost his best friend under the rudder of the rescue yacht.

No one spoke as the sailors from the *Southern Cross* fixed ropes around our waists and hoisted us aboard the yacht in rhythm at the exact moment a wave raised the lifeboat up to the level of the landing.

The Wennergrens' had soup and food ready. I slipped into a pair of sailor's trousers and a mess jacket.

Exhausted and bedraggled survivors covered all the floor space. Tarpaulins had been stretched out to cover the sparkling parquet floors in the lounges.

We rested for several hours. By then the sun had come up. The day was fresh and clear. It seemed shameless in contrast to the night before.

I went out on deck, the salt in my skin burning in the sun.

We looked out over the water at the sinking ship. It was nearly fifteen hours since the explosion. As we waited, the *Athenia* disappeared slowly from sight.

Jack was standing behind us. "God damn Nazis," he said, with a half-sob.

"Oh, well," said a fellow from the steamship company. "Anyway, we didn't have to pay our bar bill."

MY friend Bill Turner was a gun bug. He had a whole arsenal of firearms, ranging from .22 popguns to cannons that were darned near powerful enough to stop a tank. He never went out into the country without at least one gun draped on him; sometimes he took two or three along. I used to kid him about it. I called him Wild Bill, and Turner the Terrible but that didn't bother him in the least.

Sometimes that habit of his gave me a pain, and I'd try to get him to leave his guns behind unless we were actually going shooting.

Once I almost succeeded.

We were going into Swamp River after trout. The stretch of the stream we intended to fish could be reached only by bucking through a quarter mile of dense swamp growth from the road where we parked our car. It was hellish going—a bog where you sank knee deep in the muck, dead-falls to be climbed over or crawled under and a thick tangle of live and dead brush. Only a pair of nuts who wanted room to make a back cast without snagging two or three other anglers would tackle it.

Bill was wearing a shoulder holster with his brand new .44 Bisley in it. It was a gun on which he'd had the grip remodeled to fit the shape of his hand and which he'd fitted with special sights. He thought no more of it than a mother does of her first child and I knew that if anything happened to it that would be the end of our fishing.

"Why don't you leave the cannon in the car?" I suggested. "It's going to be tough enough getting through there in our waders and carrying all the rest of our stuff without lugging that thing along."

Bill looked down at what we had to go through and rubbed his chin. "I guess I'd better do that," he said, "this thing is heavy. I should have taken one of my .22's along instead."

He started to take off the shoulder holster but then he changed his mind. "You know, Walt," he said, "I've got a funny sort of a hunch. I've been lugging a gun with me everywhere I went for a hell of a long time and I've just got the feeling that the first time I don't have one on me will be the time I'll be needing it awful bad. No, I think I'll take the Bisley with me."

"Ah, you're nuts," I growled. "What the devil do you expect to meet up with in the Swamp—alligators? Now look, suppose we get caught in a shower—it's warm enough today to bring one—or suppose you fall in, which is very likely to happen. Then what? You got that gun wet and you'll want to quit fishing right away."

Bill Was A Gun Bug

*And a fortunate thing it
proved to be.*

by W. R. Marsden

"I'll take a chance on that," said Bill and he twitched his nose at me like a rabbit. When Bill did that I knew there was no use arguing with him any more.

We climbed into our waders and draped ourselves with all the assorted paraphernalia without which a trout fisherman feels naked. I tried once again to get Bill to leave the gun behind but he had made up his mind to take it along and that was that. I was a little testy at his stubbornness but I forgot that a short time after we had bucked our way to the stream and started fishing.

The trout were hungry that morning and the sport we had was ample compensation for the job we'd had getting in to the river. By noontime I had creeled four nice brookies and released three small ones and Bill's luck was running mine a close second.

We were leapfrogging our way upstream so that each man would have a piece of unfished water to cast over as he went past the other. I had gone beyond Bill around a small bend, but instead of casting I looked around for a place to rest. I was tired from shoving against the current and heaving my hobnailed boots out of the soft muck of the bottom with each step forward. I spotted a down tree that reached its upper limbs into the water and found the bank there fairly firm. I hiked myself up on it and rested my back against the tree trunk.

I unhooked my creel harness and laid it beside my rod. My feet were still in the water but with the backrest I was comfortable enough. I stoked my pipe and decided to rest here until Bill came up to me.

I saw Bill come around the bend just about as I finished my smoke. He was about twenty yards downstream from me working along the opposite bank, backhanding a wet fly across the current. I took the pipe from my mouth to knock it out; just then I caught a whiff of a peculiar odor. It was kind of sweetish and at the same time musty. I looked around me for the source but could not find it. Then I heard a faint scraping

sound behind and above me. I craned my neck to see what it was and came close to passing out cold.

There was a copperhead stretched out on the tree trunk on a level with my eyes and not a foot away. I dropped my pipe and slapped my hands to the ground but before I could shove myself away from the tree the copperhead whipped itself into a coil and hissed angrily at me. I was paralyzed. I couldn't have moved then no matter what happened.

All that I'd ever read or heard about poisonous snakes was to the effect that if you stayed absolutely motionless in the presence of one, it would go on about its business and leave you alone. But this reptile seemed to be the nasty-minded exception to that rule. Motionless? Hell, I was stiff with fright. I didn't move a muscle. I scarcely breathed. But did it go on its way and leave me alone? Not much! It stayed right where it was, coiled up and weaving its head like a boxer feinting for an opening to land a k.o. punch.

LATER, I figured that the copperhead must have been going to the water on an accustomed path and was in no mind to detour on my account.

I had read once about a man who frightened a snake away from him by spitting at it. In desperation I tried to work up enough saliva to spit but my mouth was dry. Then I tried to call Bill but fear had me by the throat. Finally I managed to swallow and get out a hoarse croak. I didn't know how far away Bill was at the time, I didn't dare turn my head to look for him, but by a streak of great luck he heard me.

"You say something, Walt?" he called.

I swallowed again and this time I was able to speak. "Bill, come over here quick!"

"What did you say?" he answered, "I can't hear you."

"For God's sake, Bill, get over here, will you?" I got this out a little louder and Bill understood me but I died twice before I heard the welcome sound of his waders splashing across to my side of the stream. It seemed to me that the copperhead's weaving head was drawing back a little as if it were getting set to strike and I'm sure I saw a muscular ripple run along its coils.

"What's the matter with you, are you sick or something?" asked Bill.

I gasped, "There's a copperhead on the tree right near me."

"What?" he said, then: "Uh-oh, I see it. Hold still now, don't move. Hold it."

I heard a click and knew he had cocked his gun. I wondered how in

hell he was going to shoot past me and hit that snake because my head was right in his line of fire. Then there was a terrific blast. I felt the breeze of the bullet on my cheek but I saw it smash into the coils and kick the copperhead back on the tree trunk. I threw myself flat on my face and dug my nose into the ground while Bill shot twice more over my head.

"Okay, Walt," he said, "I got him." For a couple of seconds I was too weak to move. When I mustered enough strength to sit upright I saw that Bill was leaning against a limb of the tree. Now was the time for him to make me eat crow for trying to make him leave his gun behind. And I was ready to eat it, feathers and all. But Bill never was the kind of a

guy to rub a man's nose in the mud. What he said was: "I'm damned glad I had this .44 with me. I never could have done that with a .22. I couldn't try for the head on the first shot with your big ears in the way. It was close enough on the body shot. Too close. Boy, I'm beginning to feel weak. I was scared stiff." He was scared stiff!

*The Travels of The Mississippi
Regiment of Rifle Men under the
Command of Col. Jeff. Davis
Camp Independence July 11-
1846*

*This was Sunday Morning at 4 o'clock
The Reveille was beat and every man
was at his Post The Roll was called
and Orders was given by Capt. John Willis
for every Man to Pack up and be Redy for
The March for the Boat which Order
was promptly attended to and about
The Line was formed and the March
Fencible, Marched off & Then The State
Fencible, Marched off Then The Suther
Southern Marched off for The Boat
When we arrived at The Rail Road
we filed Left and went Down to the
Boat where we filed Left to the River
where we filed Left to the River*

THIS was Sunday morning at 4 o'clock when the reveille was beat and every man was at his post, the roll was called and orders was given by Capt. John Willis for every man to pack up and be ready for the march for the boat, which order was promptly attended. About 9 o'clock the line was formed and then the Raymond Fencibles marched off & then the State Fencibles marched off then the Suther Southern marched off for the boat. When we arrived at the railroad we filed left and went down to the depot and then down Washington Street opposite the steamboat landing where we filed left to the river. Then the quartermaster came down and brought our tents and our

camp equipage. Then we all was marched out on the Battleground and pitched out tents and then went about supper all in fine spirits.

July 14. We got breakfast and then the rain commenced to fall and to pore down all that day and night.

15. Next morning the water was shoe deep and yet raining, and at night the water was 12 inches in our tents and in the slues it was waist-deep and yet raining. There was a few holes (knolls) that was not covered with water, and there we pitched our fire, when we made the fence (illegible) for that night.

16. Col. Jeff Davis sent orders to the camp for all the Miss. Regiment to strike tents and move up to New

**A. E. F.
1846 Style**

*A correspondent sends
this diary of a soldier
believed to have been
killed in action later.*

by JOSIAH GODWIN

Orleans, which orders was promptly obeyed and all things was soon at the river and ready for the steamboat. Southern to take us off, which the boat was soon ready and we was all on board of her and we traveling up stream, while the rain was falling on us. We soon arrived off the saw mill, at which place we landed and took all our things to our new barracks where each company was soon settled away, when Capt. Willis sent off and got something for a snack that night. Then there was a guard placed around the barracks with strict orders for none to pass out and we was soon all settled away for sleep.

17. I was taken with a very sore throat and felt very unwell and got permit from Capt. Willis to go uptown which he granted, and I got some Hays's liniment and found much relief from it. I remained uptown all that day and night and walked round with Major Jas. Guin until about 11 o'clock that night and saw Sergt. Scott and his guard picking up the boys at the St. Charles as they walked in to get a drop of the creature, and I went off to bed and left him hunting round.

18. I arose very early next morning and took a small stroll round and took some 3 juleps then took my breakfast and then started for our barracks, finding when I arrived at the gate the question was put to me: "When did you pass out and where you pass out." My answer was "Yesterday evening and past out the gate by Capt. Willis," which was all right. But the law was stricter than when I left. They had commenced to draw the things down on the boys and they

could not get "the creature" as plentiful as when at the Battleground, but I and Suit always had some close by where we could get a suck.

July 20. The Illinois & Tenn. & Ohio troops was passing down daily and the Miss. troops was cheering them as they past by our barracks to the Battleground where they went to their camping ground.

21. Our officers was making the ropes titer and titer on us. We could not even pass out for water from the river without being past out by a commission officer.

22. Saml. Suit & Wm. Frier & Irvin went out the back way for the purpos of taking a evening walk around and to get a small quantity of the Creature or the "ohbejoyful," when they was met by Capt. John Willis going round to Col. Davis' quarters. "Hay," says Capt. W. to Sam, "Mr. Suit how did you get out?" "Captain, I drop the oyshter." When Capt. Willis ordered them back to barracks and put them all 3 on guard for the night Irvin grumbled but all in vain.

23. I went to Capt. Willis and asked him to let Miller and myself pass out for 30 minuts which he denyd me forthwith and sed none could pass out that day. I thouht very hard of it but sed nothing untill I saw him pass John Markham, James Pack, R. Richardson and others, then I thouht very hard of Capt. Willis.

And sow things continued to the day of the 26th July. We all was illegible rains and some few of the flock was permitted to pass out and inn just when they pleased. On the 24th at night Capt. Willis sed that we might all go and take a baith in the river and Sergeant Hickey was to take charge of the squad. I went with that number but did not stay long in the water. I came out and drest and went to barracks and turned in for to go to sleep. When Sergt. Hickey took his squad to a coffee house to get a little of the "ohbejoyful," Col. Jeff Davis came pasing by and seeing sow meny of the Southernns out, he came to the officer of the guard to have the roll cald and to mark every absente who did not answer to his name, which was surprising to Capt. J. W., and the Ordley Scott to call the roll at this late our of the night. But it was dun and a guard of eight men was detailed, and one sergeant to take command of the same and to go uptown and bring home all that was out, when it was done. I am told the boys scamp-erd and made tracks for the barracks. When here, ther names was taken down and reported to the officer of the guard by the corporal of the guard. Some of the boys came the way they went out. They all was full of "the Creature."

26th; Sunday. When we received orders to get redy for the steamboat

Allabama and about 9 o'clock she maid her appirence at the woarf where we was packing down all our camp's aquipige. Then the drum was beet at our old quarters, where we formed and marched down to the boat where we was soon all marched on board, and about 12 M o'clock we left for Mexico. We had a very pleasant trip down the Miss. River and came to anker that nite just above the Light-house.

JULY 27th. When we got under way and crost the bar outside of the mouth of the Miss. River into the Gulf of Mexico, bound for the Mexican shores and the weather was fine and beautiful and we past over the water finely and so we all was out of sight of land, where there was nothing to be seen but blue sky and deep blue sea.

28th. And the morning was beautiful and the sun rose beautiful and ful of splendor. All things looked beautiful and a fine breese. Some few of our croud was "calling for New York," but it was soon over and the day past off. The sun set as beautiful as when he rose in the morning. We all was soon stode away for the night.

29th. The wind continued to blow a sweet and pleasant breese from S. W. and we hedded a little south of west and our day past off all in good umour and well condishun. Amen.

30. This was the day when we were to see the land of Mexico. There was meny bets made on the boat what our we would make land, and about 11 o'clock the word was past out "Land in sight," when every eye was turned for land and everybody felt releaved to think we would soon be on shore where we would not again here the word "Trim boat!" But there we met with our strange frends whom we are to become acquainted with. We anchored off the place where we were to land and the wind begin to blow much harder than when we was in the gulf, and it began to shower prety hard and wet everything on deck and we rolled and toust untill about 9 o'clock in the morning (July 31st) when came along-side of us a scrue steamer of a smaller size which landed us on shore.

July 31st. When I reached the sand beech I was very dry and started for water. I saw a croud standing a short distans from where I was and I went up there to see. When arriving at the place I saw a man drawing water from a barrel, which I called on him for a cupfull of water which he handed me and sed "A pickayune for that full." I drank the water and sed I had no pick but would like to have another cupfull, when he sed "You cannot get it." I thouht it very hard to buy water. All things was soon on shore and the wagons came when it was loded with our tents, when Capt. Willis took a

small squad with him to picke the tents, which he done in the shortis time. Sow in the corse of som two ours we all was snugly fixed off at our tents, and got some dinner, when meny of us went down to the beech and went bathing and crabbing and fishing —and what a supper we had!

Aug. 1st. In the morning first thing there was Capt. John Willis as ushul. "Fall in!" At that word the line was soon formed and off for the beech to look for a drill ground, which we soon found, and Capt. Willis began to trot the boys about and around and while he was engaged in the drill the shour of rain came and off we put for camp; but was to late, we all got wet before we reached camp. We changed cloths but there came another and wet meny who had put on dry cloaths. After breakfast Col. Davis took out the officers and troted them about. They was called by the regt. orcord (awkward) squads, for take out some 4 or five and the ballance was good, by John! And here came the rain.

Aug. 2nd. I belve there was 8 showers in the 24 hours and it continued for 3 weeks. John M. Barnes and myself ust to sleep together and when we or each of us herd the rain comming, we just rise and call and push for the tent untill the rain was over, then come out and spread down and down and sleep again untill the next rain came on.

3rd. The rule was put down on our fishing and crabbing but we would steel out and fish & crab, for we could not stand pork & beens and been soop. We would have something fresh.

4. This brings me to look around and to see the turns and cuts of our living and the living of the Reglers. While we was put off with salt pickle pork & beens the Reglers had good corn beef, pork, beens, bacon and had a baker with them all the time and flour and crackers & pickle onions and rice and molases, when the volunteers only aloud pickle pork & bacon & beens & a small rashion of sugar and coffee. I thouht this was a little tite on the natives but had to stand it.

5. This was a very dark and gloomy morning but Capt. W. ordered out for drill, and we had just formed line when the rain commenced falling with all power on us, when we was ordered to out tents, where we remained untill we got our coffee & pork. Then some of us went fishing and crabbing.

(This do not belong at this place, it belongs to the 3rd day of Augt. Left out by a mistake in copying it off. This day was Monday morning and I never saw it rain harder in all my life. We had orders to strike tents and pack up for a move for the Rio Grande but it continued to rain, but Capt. Downings & Capt. Sharps companies and others went off in the rain bound for the Rio Grande. The remaining com-

panys stade and wated for the wagons untill 3 o'clock in the evening, when after loding them with our things we all was formed up and took the line of march for the Rio Grande, which was 9 miles on the sand beech, but the rain had made it very hard and furrn. We left at 4 o'clock and 20 minuts past 6 we all was at the Rio Grande. We made the 9 miles in two ours and 20 minuts. We soon had our tents all pitched and our supper eten, redy for sleep, when the drum was ordered beet, the assembly, which was done and a guard detailed for the night, and made me corpel for the night, which was not very pleasant to my feelings, and old Capt. Sharp officer of the night. And it rained all night long.)

6th. The morning dark and gloomy untill about 10 o'clock when it faired off beautifully and John M. Barnes & John Craft and Josiah H. Godwin took a walk down on the sand beech where we met a wagon from Brasos and he had som brandy and we fld our can-tean which just caust us \$1.00.

AUG 7th. This is a holiday for all of us. There is no guard for none of our company to attend sow we had our own fun. Nothing of intrest was acted in camp. The day fine and warm.

8th. This is one of the most beautiful mornings that eye ever beheld. The sunrise was one of the most glorious seens that my eyes ever beheld and the breez was very pleasant and all things seemed to be sow beautiful, so went with the end of the . . .

9th. This is Sunday, the Lord's day when every child of God should bough, and I am corpl. of the guard & N. S. Watts sergeant and I am very sick with the dierrcar so sick I can scarsley attend to my duty, but in the evening Frier made his appearance in camp with a fine string of fish and another string brought by J. M. Barnes of crabs. What a supper we had that night! All tho I was sick all day, but I could not miss fish & crabs. I only ete 11 crabs and two fish and a pint of coffee and then went to the guard tent and fought muskiet-ers the night out. Sow ended the 9th day, August, 1846.

Aug. 10th. This was a cross day with Capt. Willis. He arose looking snarley and crabbed and commenced scolding the men but soon they were all marched down to the beach where the reg'lar drillground is. It was not meny minuts after Capt. W. had his orchard squad composed of J. M. Barnes, G. B. Taylor, Tathan C. Baines, L. M. Turner Stout, F. Clark, S. Wharten and C. Ellis, which was put under Lieut. Arthur to drill, which made the boys quite rothey and Capt. W. looked ill at every one of us. While some of us was blest with

good helth the others are confined with sickness and now another of the Raymond Fencibles are going to his long home where no travler returns. There his remains will ly untill that grate day shall come and the grand revelee shall cause everybody to ap-pier. He is a long ways from any of his relations on this lonsome sand beech sleeping the lonely sleep of deth.

11th. Nothing more than regler duty of the day.

12th. One more of the Yazoo Vol-unteers is ded. Nothing more for the day.

13th. There are meny flying re-ports brought down the Rio Grande by the steamboats. They allways have something from Gen. Taylor and where we are going to have a hard battle but when we come to inquire about it, the report is all.

14th. And continued things untill 23rd Augt. But all the officers was cross and looked ill-natured.

23rd. The day so lovley, such a fine breese and sow was the night untill about 3 o'clock when we all was aroused by a sudden blow of wind & rain N.E. It rained & bleu almost like the last time and about 7 A.M. there came another and lasted one our and a half. Then it was a fine day. At 2 p.m. orders was given to all hands to strike tents and pack up and take the things to the river where the steam-boat Virginian lay, where we were going to take passage for Coumargo. We stoad all things aboard.

24th. At daylight off we put out and was making our way up the Rio Grande and against one of the strong-est currents I ever saw run for a steam-boat (lit. S.B. boat) to travel against, and the Rio Grande is surten one of the most crucked rivers I ever saw. The bends & points are just as short; yes, they run more than right angle. We could not make more than 70 or 80 miles from the first daun of day to 9 or 10 o'clock at night and our boat was second rate. The river was all overflown. The banks was under the water all the way along untill we past

Mattemoras. Then now and then you could see a bank som two feet out of the water. We stoped som 25 or 30 miles this side Mattemoras.

25th. We ware off this morning by the gray lite of day. The country, all that was out of the water, looked very leavil and furtile. There was som small patches where corn had bin raised and gathered but the water was nearly over all the tops of them. Weather fine and good.

26th. This was a very fine morning but soon it came on to rain and rain it did all day and night and next day continued to rain and that night about 2 o'clock I was taken with a chill which lasted me untill next day about 5 o'clock and then came the fever and all other sickness. O what a dear job to pore Josiah! I never shall forget the year 1846!

27th. This was a sad morning. O what grones came from the sick and from those who had been taken sick. This trip we ware on a travling horse pospitle; as for myself god knows I was bad anuff.

28th. This was all sorts of a cun-try. The land looks high and furtile. The cotton groth is very fine looking and the corn is just as good corn as could be asked for, and then seeing the way it was cultivated I should think the land was magnum bonom and fine. And I think it would make most any-body laugh to see the mcn all cooking and the way the sheep died is sinful. There must have been kild 25 or 30 sheep and menney of them was 4 horns on a hed, two on a side. As for our mess we had two whole ones and the way we made the mutton go was sin-ful. Dodd is pumkins when he comes to cooking. This here is a little ahed of our old frends pork & beans & supe.

29th. We went off with a full hed of steem making good way up the Rio Grande when we came in sight of Mattemoras, where we saw the Stars and Strips unfolded to the breez of heaven, which must of gladden every american hart with a thout "Long may you wave over the land of the free and home of the brave."

30th. Sunday has come again and has brung a fine rain. This is what we call comfortable. Our coffee is very hot but soon coold by the rain. Oh who wouldn't be a solger and stand up to this kind of life.

FINAL ENTRY.
This was written by Josiah H. God-win at the hospital on the 31st day of Decr. 1846 and I am yet sick and I cannot find out by my own feelings when I shall get better, nor can get any infirmation from anybody else. That Grate Power that rules and gov-erns all things knows when and not before; may the time haisen onwards just as fast as the breezes of heaven can bring it on for pore me. J.H.G.

Solution to crossword puzzle on page 116

C	O	P	P	I	C	E		B	A	S	S	O	S	
A	V	I	A	T	O	R		A	L	L	U	D	E	S
V	E	N	D	E	R	S		S	E	A	P	O	R	T
I	R	K		M	E	A	T	S		V	E	R	V	E
L	A	I	D		S	T	R	I	P		R	O	A	N
E	W	E	R	S		Z	O	N	E	S		U	N	O
R	E	S	A	L	E		P	E	N	T	I	S	T	S
						P	A	N	T		T	A	R	N
I	M	P	E	N	D	E	D		L	A	D	I	E	S
S	I	R		T	E	N	O	R		P	I	N	T	A
O	R	E	S		D	E	L	E	S		A	T	O	P
B	A	S	A	L		M	E	A	N	S		R	I	P
A	G	A	T	I	N	E		C	A	P	S	U	L	E
R	E	G	I	M	E	N	T		T	R	E	A	D	E
S		E	N	N	E	I		S	L		Y	N	E	S

The BROTHERHOOD

An American newspaper man meets a wily Turk and a lovely lady in Stamboul—and risks a voyage of rescue into the enemy's lair up the Danube



AFTER a morning spent renewing old acquaintance with the native city, John Fosbery came back to the small hotel run by a Greek on the Stamboul waterfront that suited both his means, and his desire to see and not be too conspicuous.

The gay-hued caiques lay three deep along the wharves, and yelling stevedores swarmed about them. On the blue sparkling waters of the Golden Horn more of such boats careened their red sails among larger craft, while yellow sunshine drenched them all—together with a fine ripe smell of dead fish, seaweed and a restaurant that cooked its mutton over open coals.

Fosbery was a lean, loose-hung fellow with dark hair and humorous gaze. His gray eyes and his manner showed the recklessness that as a youth had made him fake his age to join the British Flying Corps, and his jaw the grit that after capture by the Turks had brought him through the ghastly march from Kut-el-Amara on which so many men had died. Also there was about him something of the dreamer, of the man who feels more strongly of ideas than things, and who has led lost causes since the world was young.

With an athlete's ease, he dodged an ox-cart, swung round a barrow carrying the brass urns of a sherbet-seller and was entering the arch into the hotel court when an urchin who was squatting by the wall accosted him.

Thinking that he was one of the unsavory touts with whom Istanbul is infested, Fosbery ignored him. But the boy came close and whispered: "Zaglul."

That stopped Fosbery. "Zaglul has amber you might wish to see."

The old fox, Fosbery thought. Zaglul could have used the mail, a written note or the telephone, but he sent his message by word-of-mouth and furtively, as he had done through seventy years of tortuous dealing.

But it meant news, and Fosbery's spirits rose.

He had been star reporter on the New York *Bugle*, but after a difference with his editor on a point of ethics, he had quit the job. For some time he'd been feeling that a change was overdue. He had been too long at the New York grind. The world was too big and life too splendid all to be passed that way. Now Hitler was turning east, there was value in obscure connections in Istanbul and a fluent command of Turkish; and he had come here as a free-lance with the confidence that he did well.

Since he'd arrived, indeed, he had made no New York headlines. He had sent no cables, only a few descriptive articles. This did not worry him especially, at least as yet. The contacts he had here went deep, and had no frontiers and few loyalties. He'd get the news. But the idea of action stimulated him for its own sake, and his bank-account was none too large.

He tossed the boy a coin and left to call on Zaglul ibn Zaglul, in the Covered Bazaar.

Skirting the wharves to where Galata Bridge reaches Stamboul across the Golden Horn, he turned to the right, away from it, along the Rue de la Sublime Porte.

In spite of Mustafa Kemal's reforms, the old Queen of the Bosphorus was not much changed. The swarms of pariah dogs were gone, to avoid bloodshed put upon an island in the Gulf to starve and tear each other until only bones remained; the mighty-chested porters bent no longer under their huge loads since Atatürk forbade this as affronting Turkish dignity; in the streets at least, the fez, the baggy trousers and the flowing robes had been replaced by European clothes. But Istanbul was the same wise, sinister and watchful city, with the dark charm of a woman who has lived much and has known much evil, is no longer young but retains ravished beauty and has made good the loss of freshness by sophistication. As Zaglul told him when they'd met last time, speaking of the new young state of Atatürk: "Turkey's heart may have moved to Ankara, but her soul is still in Stamboul."

He passed the domed palace of the old Red Sultan of horrific memory and followed the teeming street to St. Sophia Square which is the hub of old Stamboul.

Crossing that open space so famed in history, he went along an alley roofed with vine-hung trellis into the Covered Bazaar, for centuries the site of Stamboul's concentrated choicer trade.

Here was an unexpected change of atmosphere, with nothing of the babble and the crush the name suggests. Once in its cloistered cool, an old-world leisure reigned. Displays of rare jewels, weapons, fabrics, pottery were tended by grave, watchful men, and the air was spiced with scents of coffee, rosewater and hashish which were all for sale.

But Kemal's prosaic clothes could not conceal the quality of many of the men the place contained. To a discerning eye, mountaineers, caique captains, gypsies, Kurds, Circassians all revealed themselves, while strolling through the quiet arcades or taking coffee in the low cafés.

IN the main thoroughfare, John Fosbery turned into a shop whose fittings would have graced Fifth Avenue and which displayed choice objects with the best of taste. A dark fellow in a Palm Beach suit came up and bowed. "He is expecting me, John Fosbery," said the American.

By and by the slim dark clerk returned and led him across a court into the presence of an impressive man.

He wore a black silk skullcap with a gold lace band and the flowing garments of the old régime, and he sat upon a carpet on a pile of cushions. Beside him on a rosewood stool was an enormous dog-eared ledger which a little boy was turning for him.

He was very old. His thin face was of great refinement, pale buff in color with flesh of a waxen texture and the brow deeply seamed. Under his eyes were crepe-like pouches and from the angles of his thin, hooked nose his cheeks hung down in deep-lined folds. His mouth was wide, with red, curved lips; his hair hung to his ears in curls, dyed black and oiled. All made a setting for his eyes, which were brown, lustrous and intensely keen.

This old Armenian's mere existence was the measure of his quality; for all his life, through the régime of Abdul

of DANGER A COMPLETE NOVEL

by *Allan Swinton*

Hamid at his bloody worst, through the Young Turk revolution, through the Great War and the chaos following, he had maintained a center of espionage. There had been no intrigue in Stamboul for seventy years some of whose threads could not be traced to him—yet here he sat, as he had always done, unmarked by torture, rich and unafraid. He served for pay impartially all comers and, though he gave his word but rarely, once it was given he would not break it. His trade and his news connections spread through all the middle East.

He it was who in '17 had got money in to Fosbery and his fellow-prisoners, planned their escapes and hidden them in Stamboul till they could get away; he had been the brains behind the famed "White Lady of Constantinople," friend of prisoners; he had served Young Turks and old Abdul the Damned, and yet survived.

At sight of Fosbery, this unmitigated and successful rogue bowed low and smiled. His was a rare smile, unctuous and yet condescending, filled with harsh humor, insight to human frailties and sardonic zest.

French, Russian or English were all one to Zaglul, and he used the latter in a grating voice. "Ah! You come soon, my friend."

The clerk had placed a chair for Fosbery. "Sit down," said his host. "Sit down. Will you have coffee?"

WHEN they were alone, and kirsch and coffee were at Fosbery's elbow, they exchanged pleasantries awhile, Zaglul examining his guest intently with his subtle eyes. For his part, Fosbery waited, knowing too much of Turkish ways to be the first to broach a point.

His face like a waxen carving, at length Zaglul said: "As one who knows what prison means, you might be willing to befriend a fugitive?"

The thought brought back to Fosbery like yesterday the march through Anatolia: the whips, the bloody feet, the dysentery, the grisly years in prison and the long months of hiding in the Stamboul hovels, watching life move around him like a rat under a plank.

"I might."

"And you can run a boat?"

After the war, in search of health, Fosbery had made a famous boat-trip, up the Rhine, through the ship canal and down the Danube, crossing all Europe from the Dutch coast to Rumania.

"You know I can."

"I mean at sea. By navigation. Could you, for instance, bring one from the Danube through the Black Sea here?"

He wondered what this could be leading to. "Yes. The right sort of boat, that is."

The old man nodded and stayed quiet awhile, his still eyes measuringly on Fosbery's. Then he said: "You asked my help to get the news. There is a way that you might help a fugitive from Nazi rule and at the same time get a piece of news of world-wide interest."

There was a silence then, both of them sitting still and watchfully.

Zaglul went on: "Would you give your word that, if you can not help in this, what you have learned will rest with you?"

There was another wait while Fosbery pondered. Then, there being nothing he could lose, he said: "All right. What is the tale?"

But Zaglul shook his head. "That's all you need to hear from me. If you are interested, call on this person." He took from underneath his robe a card. There was no printing on it but the written name: "*A. Bryan, Tokatlian Hotel.*" Fosbery had expected something Balkan and mysterious and the matter-of-factness of "*A. Bryan,*" somehow dampened him.

FOSBERY had lunch before he took the matter further: lobster *pilaf* with whole-meal bread, goat's cheese and fruit and Cyprian wine, in a café that looked across the Marmora to the blue Asian hills through which he had been driven with thirteen thousand English on the weary march from Mesopotamia. Events today had turned his mind to dwell on that, and with surprise he realized that nothing he had done since then seemed so worth while as having shared that horror with his fellow-men.

Afterward, refreshed and with a pleasant feeling of adventure pending, he returned the way he'd come and crossed the bridge spanning the Horn into Galata seaport, where the ocean-going steamers lie. From there he went up the winding steep street through the Jewish quarter and thence climbed the narrow steps into Pera, the modern section of Istanbul. This is a pleasant if somewhat garish spot, a little Paris, with an air of freshness and of leisure, with smart shops and blocks of flats, green shrubberies and stately cypress trees. The main street is the Gran' Rue de Pera, which centers on the first-class Tokatlian Hotel, whose plate-glass windows front the street.

As Fosbery entered, sitting in a corner by some ferns, he saw the girl again. He had seen her twice before, once on the street and once when he had dined here for a respite from the Greek's and to see if anyone of interest politically was staying here.

She was handsome and dressed extremely well, dark and red-lipped, reminding him of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's model, Beatrice. She was obviously not Turkish, and might be of any European race; an unusual-looking girl to find alone—as she appeared to be—in such a city. He had admired her and had wondered if they might not get acquainted at the dinner dance. His face must have shown his thoughts for as their eyes met her reaction had been one to draw from him a mental, "Ouch!" and make him reconsider them. If, as seemed likely—for few other women go alone in Balkan cities—she was of the *demi-monde*, she was either most expensive or extremely wise.

At the desk he asked the clerk: "Mr. Bryan, please."

The Swiss ran his finger down the list. "We have no M'sieur Bryan. Mam'selle Bryan, yes."

He showed him Zaglul's card. "*Mam'selle Anne Bryan,*" said the man. "That is she over there." He pointed to the girl.

It was a shock, a very pleasant one. He felt a certain tension as he walked across. Her face set when she saw that he was going to speak. As he bowed she looked as cold as ice. Taking his cue from Zaglul, he did not say much. "A friend in Stamboul gave me this." He offered the card. "It was about a boat."

Her hostility dissolved. "Oh, yes, of course. I beg your pardon." Her first-rate English and its accent made him stare and alter his ideas.

There was a pause. She gave a warning sign to where, beyond the ferns, two Germans were in conversation. Fosbery observed a blond, good-looking man who was to play a major part in all that meeting was to bring about.

He said: "We could take a drive."

"Yes. We'll do that."

As they went out he eyed her, puzzled and incredulous at what his ears had learned. He hailed one of the horse-drawn carriages that supplement the Pera taxicabs and told the driver: "Seraglio Gardens. Drive around." The burly Turk touched his hat.

As they clattered up the sunny street he turned to her:

"Am I mistaken or are you American?"

She smiled: "Yes. I'm American."

"And from New England?"

"Yes again."

"Well I'll be—"

"Why so surprised? Lots come from Eastern Europe."

"Not named A. Bryan, with a Boston accent."

She answered with the faintest smile that was more eloquent than words. They sat in silence as the carriage turned out of the Rue de Pera into a steep road under plane trees that climbed toward the Sultan's palace and then entered through the Stamboul Gate what used to be his *harem* gardens but are now a public park.

Checking his interest as to her person, he remarked: "All I've been told is that a man is needed who will bring a boat down from Rumania."

She glanced at the driver with a warning look and he subsided and kept silent till they reached the entrance to a spot he knew. Here it was, twenty years ago, that the beloved "White Lady," friend of fugitives, had kept rendezvous. He said: "There is a view here you might care to see."

She nodded and he stopped the carriage, leading her down the pathway through the shrubs into the myrtle arbor with its stone seat looking down on Galata, with Stamboul across the Golden Horn standing like Rome on seven low hills. Spread out below, they saw the host of spires and minarets underneath Saint Sophia's mighty dome, backed by the blue, glittering Sea of Marmora.

They leaned on the parapet some moments. Then he said: "I've promised if I can't do what you want the thing is safe with me."

He could sense her struggle with her caution as she tried to measure him.

HE had never seen a girl so baffling. Her face was youthful but her eyes contrasted, seeming far older and experienced beyond her years. Watchfulness, weariness, fear, defiance, all appeared in them, together with another thing he could not read. Perhaps, he thought, she might be passing through some great ordeal. Maybe those eyes had seen too much for one so young. But it might be something on her conscience that gave her that look.

"You can navigate a boat?" she temporized.

"Yes. I've sailed down from Rumania before, in fact."

"What would you charge to bring one down for me?"

"With a refugee, nothing."

"You must be paid. I couldn't accept—"

He cut her off: "I don't know if I'll do it. If I do it will be free, to help. What is the proposition?"

Once more she struggled with her caution and he knew that only fear could teach her that so well. He

sensed, too, that the thought of taking help from him unpaid affronted her.

They argued it until at last she yielded, though he could tell that she retained her scruples but suppressed them for her larger ends.

"He is in Galatz, and both the Nazis and the Russians want him."

"Who is this man?"

Again she hesitated. Then she said: "Yegor Pryanski."

For a moment the name meant nothing to him. Then he remembered: Yegor Pryanski, the "Lion of Warsaw," Poland's grand old patriot. But it was years since he'd been news.

She went on: "We left Warsaw just before the Nazis came and got as far as Katowitz. Then we came on an oil-barge down the river to Galatz. He'd been ill all along and when we got there, he collapsed, and then Rumania went Nazi, and the only way to get him out now is by a boat of our own. And that will be an awful chance. The Gestapo is watching every place for refugees."

"But," he said, puzzled, "forgive my curiosity, but how do you come into this?"

"He is my grandfather. My father emigrated to America and changed his name. Anne Bryan should be Anna Pryanski."

CHAPTER TWO



JOHN FOSBERY prowled disconsolately round the dingy oil-port of Galatz and cursed himself. He had been waiting at a loose end in the town a week, in the course of which the facts of his position had had time to clear themselves from the emotion that had brought him there. They were both disconcerting and humiliating.

He had been tricked by the old fox Zaglul, who, for his own designs, had used his need for news to get him in a spot from which he could not back out and keep his self-respect. True, as Zaglul had told him, there was news of world-wide interest in the business, but the interest was very small. "Yegor Pryanski, ill and fleeing from the Nazis, cared for by beautiful American granddaughter, graduate of Bryn Mawr," was good, up to a point. But it was not the sort of stuff he had to have if he was going to eat in future. And anyway he couldn't use it till the man was safe. He'd given his word. And if he quit the business now, for the remainder of his life he'd have it on his conscience that he'd failed a girl. They had tossed him a bait, and he had swallowed it, hook, line and sinker. And even at that, he had been fooled; he hadn't had the pleasure he'd expected of her company so far, a prospect he'd looked forward to with no small zest after the smile he'd given him once to help make up his mind when she had thought he might be wavering. She could thaw all right if she chose.

He should have quit the moment he had learned she was not traveling with him.

When they had parted after he'd agreed to do the job, he had expected they would meet again, to lay their plans. But she had disappeared, and Zaglul told him: "Go to Galatz and wait, and everything will be arranged."

In the heat of a quixotic urge, he'd downed a feeling of resentment at their methods and obeyed, coming by ship because in that way he could see again the route he'd have to sail. He had made friends with the skipper and from the bridge refreshed his memory the whole way up.

Now here he'd been a clear week kicking his heels around this lousy town watching his bank-roll wilt. He was a sap!

All through his life his impulses had tripped him up, like the one that landed him in Kut in '16, meddling in

a war in which he had no stake, and the last one in New York, when for sentimental reasons, he'd refused assignment to that divorce-case and had caused the flare-up that had ended in this free-lance jaunt.

Thus John Fosbery for a whole day while he wandered round Galatz, till suddenly his patience broke. To hell with it! There was a steamer south tomorrow and he'd be on board. He'd be an everlasting mutt to stay.

Toward supper-time, he turned up from the waterfront to his hotel, a busy haunt of tanker captains, oil-field engineers and such-like men, to have a drink before his meal.

In the bar, stuffy and filled with men and girls, a small dark man in a cheap blue suit and derby hat approached. He had a little waxed mustache and looked uncannily like Charlie Chaplin. He jerked a bow and said in lamentable English: "Meestair Fosbery?"

"Yes."

"It 'as been told me that you weesh a boat."

John's apathy changed to alertness. "Oh? Who told you that?"

"A frien'." The fellow glanced around. His beady eyes on Fosbery's, he said quickly: "Een Stamboul. Een the ol' bazaar."

Then he raised his voice and asked aggressively: "You wan' theez boat?"

"I might," said Fosbery, much relieved that he had not been brought to face the issue of tomorrow's steamer.

"You come an' see. Vairy good boat. Sheap. Geev' away."

The fellow led toward the door and Fosbery followed him. Outside, he stopped the flood of broken English. "Can you speak Turkish?"

"Yes sair."

"Use it, then."

The small man's name, he said, was Simon Vaisili. He was a Bulgarian, and Zaglul's agent. Everything had been arranged. The boat and crew were hid upstream all ready to sail. There were no passengers as yet. He was to bring them later on. It was safer that the American gentleman should not visit them. There were informers everywhere. They would embark after dark.

THE boat to which they came after a journey of two hours or so lay at a small wharf used for grain-flats up a creek among the reedy marshes bordering Lake Bratych, five miles past where Galatz's outer suburbs stopped, a stout, short-masted, sloop-rigged craft with light-blue hull and brick-red sails. She had an engine for the river work and quarters for four forward and a main cabin aft with bunks for three. Astern of her was moored one of the small flat-bottomed craft, half barge, half houseboat, which are common to the upper Danube.

Satisfied with the boat, he turned to see what crew he had, to be aware of a most curious foreboding sense.

They were, beside Vaisili, two. An oddly assorted pair, a stocky blond man with a button nose, high cheekbones and expressionless blue eyes, and a sharp dark oily fellow, probably a Levantine, and something he sensed about them sounded in his brain a warning note.

It was not their appearance that so awakened his protective instincts, but a tension which he felt in them of which he knew he was the cause. Some issue vital to them turned on him; they had waited in suspense for his arrival and were now trying to assess his possibilities.

He told himself that such curiosity was normal toward a stranger under whom they were to serve at sea, and that his most un-nautical appearance might be troubling them.

Yet there was something more about them, or at least about the darker one, that puzzled him, and as he started checking up the gear his deeper thoughts were seeking for an explanation. He was certain that he had not seen the man before. What was it about him that was so familiar?

Now that the affair had taken shape again, he felt less irritated and was waiting with increasing tension for the rest to come, not admitting for a moment that what held him chiefly was anticipation of the renewal of his contact with Anne Bryan, who was Anna Pryanski, and who, with Zaglul, had so skillfully contrived to make a tool of him.

He thought about the combination of events that had brought him from New York to here, and suddenly his senses once more struck a warning note, but from a different cause. This was the old game still, the irresponsibility that had kept him wandering while other men made good and put down roots that would sustain them when their powers were not so vigorous. He ought to end it, get grown up, dig in and make himself a niche. He ought to have a wife, and kids, a place in the community, things he could cling to, that would anchor and sustain him in the years to come. After he'd done this job, by heck, he'd go for them. It was high time. The consciousness of it was troubling.

Anticipation heightened as the dark came down. He sat on the hatch and smoked his pipe and waited, listening to the noises of a marsh at night. Somewhere far off he heard the tump of drums, the squeal of flutes and peasant voices in a haunting song. The hours slid past and no one came. At midnight he made coffee, then once again resumed his watch.

It was near autumn and the season's melancholy touched the air. Beyond the dykes the marshes swept away, reedbed and more and creek, under a waxing moon. From behind him, where the Danube flowed, he heard the *thump-thump* of a steamer's screw. Overhead came now and then the rush of wild-ducks' wings and in the marsh were quacks and squatterings.

There was beauty in it, and longing, and as the time went by it worked on him a spell and he experienced reversal of his earlier feelings, an upwelling of emotion he had had before and which was deeply satisfying. It was the conviction that the thrill, the mystery of living for its own sake were the best of it, better than fame or profit or success gained by some drawn-out grind. To follow life itself, wherever it might lead, and not some mundane end, that was the thing. And he had always done it to the enrichment of his soul. With the assurance, doubt and restlessness were stilled and he was suddenly content. He breathed deep of the autumn air, relaxed and felt in touch with the infinite.

And then, above the brush lining the dyke, a moving glow appeared, and as it reached a gap he saw it issued from an oil-lamp swinging from a wagon-shaft. It shone on cart-wheels and the legs of oxen as the cart came round and stopped before the gang-plank they had rigged ashore. He rose and crossed, and Vaisili's voice said: "*Effendi!*"

Someone unhooked the lamp. He saw the ugly boots, thick stockings and full petticoats of a peasant girl and followed them. The lamp was raised. He saw the arched hood of the cart, Vaisili's face, the girl's back and her head bound in a flowered kerchief. Then she turned. It was Anne Bryan, dressed as a Galician farm-girl, and she said "Good evening, Mr. Fosbery."

VAISILI had opened up the hood, and in the light he saw the man lying within. He was weak and pitifully thin, but the eyes deep in the splendid head with its fine brow and mane of snow-white hair burned quite unquenched.

Vaisili brought the other men and they got Yegor Pryanski out and carried him across the gangplank to the boat, where after much contriving with the mattress on the narrow steps they got him down below.

As the men left, Anne Bryan cared for him with tenderness, making his pillows, straightening the covers, combing his hair.

John Fosbery said: "If you want food, here's the galley." He showed her the cubbyhole across the well, where the

companion steps came down. "See? Here's a primus. Stores through this bulkhead. Cocoa—dried milk—lots of stuff. We'll leave at dawn."

"Thank you." She looked at him and for the second time since they had met she smiled. "I should apologize. I was afraid you wouldn't come. Thank you so much." But just the same he felt that subtly she was armed against him.

He went on deck. The east was gray. He told the fair man, Plauen, who was the engine-man, "We'll start when there's light enough," then went ashore and freed the lines, taking a turn around the stakes and bringing back the ends on board.

The cart creaked off. The lamplight dwindled as it passed behind the scrub. Silence came down. The engine gave a cough as Plauen tested it. Then it wheezed back to silence.

As he waited for the time to start, the moon had set. The eastward sky was lightening to green on which took shape the silhouettes of willow-brakes and wind-gnarled trees. Over the marsh a breeze blew fresh.

There was nothing to suggest that he was carrying home the main-thread of a web as cunning as was ever spun about that hub of ages of such webs, Stamboul, with for its bait the ancient lures of fortune, liberty and woman and, as the penalties of being caught, disaster, outlawry and death.

When it was light enough he said to Plauen: "All right," and as the man went down to start the engine he cast off the lines. The engine coughed once, twice, then settled to its mutter while the stink of burned oil bit his nose. He pulled the lines on board, giving the word. Plauen tugged home the clutch. The *Fritzi Mendl* headed down-creek toward the Danube stream.

An hour had passed before Anne Bryan came on deck. They had reached the main stream of the Danube now. In the east the glow of sunrise lined long dun-gray streaks of cloud with gold, against clear jade-green sky. The river-smell was sharp and clean.

She came up from the cabin wearily and sank down on the low rail and her whole frame sagged. She pulled the kerchief from her hair and shook it free. "Thank heaven!" she said. "Two years of it, and never a moment's peace."

Sitting despondent in the peasant dress and heavy shoes, with her head hung and her elbows on her knees, she might have been all Poland then.

But by and by she raised her head. The wind blew back her fine dark hair. She stood up, breasting it, and in her youth surged up. It was America who turned to him and said: "Breakfast! You wouldn't by any chance have ham and eggs?"

He grinned. "I have. And turn mine over, please."

CHAPTER THREE



HOUGH it was twenty years since he had made this passage, once he was well out in the stream the memory of the marks came back.

With a swirling four-knot current added to the engine speed, the yawl made a good seven knots and, thinking of the shoals and cross-sets, he decided he'd play safe and not use sail until he reached the open sea.

By ten they were passing Isaccea Island, by noon he was feeling for the one navigable outlet from the middle arm.

Ahead, the river frayed into a thousand creeks, which were absorbed into a barrier of marsh and willow brakes and stunted trees, gnarled and bent westward by the ceaseless wind. Then, where the ruins of an ancient church rose from a hump of ground, he opened up a narrow passage with banks cut and staked, the entrance

to Sulina Channel that winds to the sea. He swung in, after five miles passed the town of Tulcea, then settled down to six hours' chugging through the empty marsh. All day he did not see his passengers. Anne Bryan had trudged behind the ox-cart all night long and, after they had had a meal, turned in to sleep.

At evening they raised the crowded shipping, bulbous domes and checkered lighthouses of Sulina seaport, passed them to starboard black against the sunset sky and headed for the open sea.

FOR some time he had faced a growing breeze: now he met white-capped head-seas, coffee-colored by Danube silt, which he was forced to buck until he had sufficient offing for it to be safe to get on sail. He had relieved the man called Plauen at the wheel at six.

The sea increased, and the *Fritzi Mendl* got quite gay, swooping up, slamming down her nose and tossing back bright showers of spray.

When he decided to get sail on her none of the others were on deck. He shouted for all hands. He yelled and yelled but no one came until Anne Bryan had put her head out of the cabin-well.

She had produced appropriate clothing and looked nothing of the peasant now.

He said: "Could you take this wheel a minute, please? Just keep her straight."

Balanced against the pitching of the boat, he ran along the main-hatch cover, leaped on and off the dinghy which was upturned forward of it and dropped through the hatch into the fo'c'sle, where he found his crew sprawled helpless in their bunks, abjectly sick. As soon as he was under way he'd spotted that they were poor sailors, and the thing confirmed his feeling that there was about their presence something more than had appeared.

He shook the dark one, called Immanuel Artz. "Get up and take the wheel."

The fellow's face was livid, and his lips were gray. His head lolled glassy-eyed and all he did was moan. Nor were the other two in better shape. Even if fit, he knew now, in bad weather they would be of little help. In this shape they were useless.

He went back to the helm. Anne's dress and hair were wet with spray and she was laughing with a gayety he had not seen in her till now. He said: "Look here. We've got to talk. Get something on and come back, will you please?"

She came back in a tattered oilskin she had found below and stood before him, holding on by the boom and swaying with the tossing boat.

He said: "Do you realize that none of this crew has been to sea before?"

"Well, they're your men."

"They're not," he replied indignantly. "I never saw them till last night."

"But you engaged them."

"I did not!"

They faced each other in the failing light, each disconcerted. Then he said: "There's something fishy here. Now look. I don't want to pry but I've this thing to swing. Suppose you tell me what there is to tell? Just what deal did you and Zaglul make?"

Her answer was prompt and definite. "He told me to come back here and wait with Grandfather, and everything would be arranged. That's all I knew till this man Vaisili came to the farm and said the boat was ready, and he'd fetch us in two days. Then he came with the cart. I thought you had arranged it all."

He shook his head. "When I'd agreed to do the job, Zaglul told me to come up to Galatz and wait until I heard from you. This Vaisili turned up. He had the boat and these two men and all the dope. As soon as we pushed off I spotted they were not so hot but I never dreamed they were like this."

She looked at him in sudden alarm, and when she spoke her tone held more command than protest: "Well, we can't go back. If you can navigate, I'll help you sail. I've raced a dinghy, in all weathers, in Long Island Sound. We two can work this boat."

Although her manner and her inference had riled him somewhat, his admiration for her spirit balanced this. "I never thought of going back. If it gets tough we'll make a drogue and ride it out. How do you find things down below?"

She saw her error and became contrite. "It's splendid, thank you. Grandfather's resting nicely. You've no idea how good it feels to be away."

"All right. Now you relax. Enjoy the trip. We'll raise land on the third day, if the wind doesn't change."

All night and all next day they had a sea so lively that the three men could or would not move and he and Anne Bryan sailed the boat. What with the constant call of that and her preoccupation with her grandfather, they had no chance to talk, eating apart and hand-to-mouth and having contact only when they worked sail or the wheel changed hands. But he acquired a great respect for her ability, resource and energy. She seemed to know instinctively what he required; when she didn't she obeyed him without feminine self-consciousness. And with increasing frequency the shadow that was on her broke and she was gay.

During this time he gave some thought to the position. Zaglul and secrets were synonymous, which would explain his way of handling this. But why send him to make the passage with a crew of landsmen? Maybe he hadn't. Maybe this Vaisili had simply picked them up? He'd find that out.

After dark the second night the wind went down and veered astern, and the Black Sea settled to a long, low swell. The *Fritzi Mendl's* motion eased and in the morning three bleary-eyed disheveled men crept from the fo'c'stle to the light of day.

Fosbery called Zaglul's agent. "What do you mean by letting me come out with men like these?" he asked.

Green-faced and sunken-eyed, the little man spread deprecatory hands. "I am very sorry. It is not my fault. My orders were to get the boat and men would come to me. These came with letters from—the Covered Bazaar."

So they were Zaglul's men!

Fosbery went forward to where they sat. "What are you doing on this boat?"

The dark one, Artz, replied. He was a slim, suave fellow with black curly hair, fine hands and large brown eyes, an unctuous, furtive and repellent man. Perhaps a Russian. Maybe a Hungarian. Could be a Kurd. Certainly he had not done manual work and there was about him something that was indefinitely familiar. His manner and his tone were insolent. "We are escaping from the Nazis, like the other two."

SO that was it? More refugees! That's why they'd been so interested in him—to see what sort of man their safety would depend upon. Doubtless for ample payment, Zaglul had made what he had done to help a woman a convenience.

He'd pick that bone with the old schemer when he got to port.

Of the other man, Plauen, he demanded: "What did you work at?"

"I am a river bargeman. I can steer and run the engine. Only the waves I cannot stand." The short, broad fellow stood before him, stolid and humble.

"You're a German, aren't you?"

"Ja."

"All right. Go aft and take the wheel."

To Artz he said: "Get this. To me you're just my crew. You'll work your way. Go with him aft and learn to steer."

The man pushed out a curved red underlip and shrugged, and Fosbery itched to punch his head. As Plauen left, he followed him with ostentatious nonchalance, as though he humored Fosbery for some larger end and was at pains to make it clear. But what end? Merely escape? That was by now assured and Fosbery felt that there was more to it than that. But the fellow's attitude precluded anything but open questioning and he would not invite a snub from him by trying it. There was a feeling about the whole affair that worried him.

As the day passed, it settled into perfect weather, with blue sea, rich fall sunshine and a gentle breeze.

Having had little since they sailed, Fosbery took sleep, for lack of an alternative bunking in the fo'c'stle where the three men lived.

AT about three o'clock he woke refreshed; he shaved and went on deck. Plauen was at the wheel; the boat was riding over sleek blue swells alone in the circle of the tranquil sea. Anne lay on the main-hatch in a rough gray sweater and blue sailor's slacks. She had lost her things in Warsaw but she had replaced some of them in Istanbul.

He went across to where she lay stretched on her back, her face with its eyes closed turned up to the sun.

He sat down quietly beside her, hugging his knees, and looked across the sea and felt replete with health.

It was one of those rare moments that have absolute felicity and are among the compensations which accompany adventuring. Routine life almost never brings them.

Presently her eyes opened and he said: "Hullo."

She rolled over drowsily. "Isn't it perfect?"

"Are you rested?"

"Splendidly, thank you. And Grandfather's so well."

She moved luxuriously. She showed just now no traces of the woman of the Tokatlan, hard, watchful; nor of the weary refugee; she was the woman of America: Bryn Mawr, Fifth Avenue and Boston; *soignée* and charming.

She sat up by and by and shook her hair back. "This is bliss."

The urge to kiss her rose, quite irresistible.

The mainsail hid them from the helmsman, and on impulse and expecting her to dodge, he leaned toward her.

She recoiled, then hesitated, changed her mind and quite deliberately put her face up. Not only that, she kissed him back, and with a kiss whose sort was startling.

When he'd recovered from his surprise he tried again but she rebuffed him with finality, leaving him puzzled and not a little hipped. After the feeling he had had that she was armed against him, her kiss—and more, its quality—had been both startling and flattering because he had not judged her as an easy girl. As he still did not do so there had been an obvious and thrilling inference. This swift withdrawal gave another one, one not so flattering.

By and by he asked her: "Tell me about this, how you got mixed up in it."

She paused for some moments, gazing at the smooth slopes of the marching swells, and then she said: "I wanted to know my father's people, and I came, that's all. I liked it and I stayed two years. And then the Nazis marched—"

"But you expected that. Everyone knew. You could have got away—"

"I wanted to but I couldn't. I couldn't leave them, all those people, those lovely cities, knowing what was to come and waiting, sick with fear but yet not giving in. I couldn't leave them and go back to living in a— a chocolate box, and hearing the news as though we had it from a different world."

"You take yourself pretty seriously."

"Not any more. It was at home that I did that. My clothes, my cars, my parties. I know what they amount to now."

She stopped, her eyes on his, and looking down, it seemed to him as though a veil had been withdrawn from

them. Looking into them deep, he saw there not America nor Poland but the spirit of the girl herself. "I had to stay and I saw it all." Her gaze went past him and her face changed as the horrors she had seen returned. "We knew what would be done with people like my grandfather and when we saw that Warsaw could not stand I got him out. There was no use staying anyway. It's on the outside that the work must be." Her face took an expression that, for all its youthfulness, was grim. It showed that there was much upon her mind unsaid and he was attempting to draw it out of her when the old man's voice was heard, calling her name, and she excused herself and hurried below.

The moment thus lost, when by and by she came on deck again, he was not able to recapture it. . . .

At seven next morning he was at the wheel and due to be relieved by Vaisili. It was the same crystal weather with a fall sharpness in the air. A fair breeze roughened the swells, above which skimmed the gray gulls with their eerie cries. The red sails of the *Fritzi Mendl* heeled her over them, a white wave chuckling at her bow, now and then throwing back a shower of spray that glittered in the early sun. A half an hour ago, the purple outline of a Turkish hill had risen above the sea.

Yawning, his black hair tousled, Artz appeared on deck and took a bucket to get washing water. Then he observed the line of coast that now appeared below the hill. He looked at it a moment, then came aft, accosting Fosbery. "We are across?"

"We are."

"Is it the Bosphorus?"

"We're east a bit. I'll run up-coast as soon as we're in close enough and pick it up."

He had the feeling that the man received this knowledge with much satisfaction as though in his mind some matter had been set at rest.

By twenty past the hour Vaisili had not appeared, and Fosbery yelled to Artz to turn him out.

Artz went below, to reappear at once. "He isn't here." Inside ten minutes Fosbery was knocking at the cabin door.

Anne opened it.

He said: "Can I talk to you a minute?"

"Won't you come in?"

Yegor was sitting propped up by pillows in his bunk, his face shaved and his bedding neat. He was not so much ill as owing to his age unable quickly to regain his strength. Even in bed and very weak, his bow was courtly and his eyes were proud.

John Fosbery said: "I thought you ought to know that Vaisili's disappeared."

To Pryanski's eyes, the statement brought a curious look between surprise and disbelief.

Anne queried: "Disappeared?"

"He's not on board. Plauen relieved him at the wheel at one. He says he went forward and, he thought, to bed. He must have fallen overboard, though heaven knows how. The weather was fine enough."

THE old Pole leader had lain back with eyes closed and the look of struggling to concentrate. Now his eyes opened and he said: "I think I know."

They looked at him. Anne said: "What do you mean?"

"You say this fellow was relieved at one?"

Fosbery replied: "So Plauen says."

Pryanski beckoned to him: "Put your head here, level with mine."

Fosbery obeyed, stooping until their heads were even. The old man pointed up: "You notice how I can see out?"

Following his hand, between the doorway lintel and the hatch coaming, Fosbery could see a strip of sky and a portion of the quarter-rail.

Yegor said: "When you are old, at night you drift from sleep to waking and hardly know in which you are. Also

you dream—too much. I have seen so much violence that I dream of it. Last night was very bad. Awful things I have seen come back and there were also things I have not seen. One time I thought a man stood out there with an iron bar. I saw him clearly in the moon. The bar had a big end with a square hole in it. I heard a blow, and then a splash, and the boat yawed a little. The dream woke me and I remember it was one o'clock. I think now that it was not a dream."

They stared at him. "An iron bar with a square hole?" Fosbery queried.

"Yes, and with lettering around the boss. It hung beside his leg, a bit behind him as he stood."

Anyone standing so would be beside the steersman with the bar hidden if he should turn his head. Thinking about that bar, a quick idea struck Fosbery. He said, "Wait a minute, will you?" and went out.

He came back with an object wrapped in sacking and when they'd shut the door showed them the engine-starter, with its square-holed head and maker's name embossed on it. "Is this the thing?"

"Yes. That is it."

"What was this fellow wearing—what you saw of it?"

"A leather coat with a short split in the tail, just by his hand."

"Plauen," said Fosbery, startled, and they looked at one another.

CHAPTER FOUR



Y and by Fosbery said: "Plauen killed Vaisili. What for? You know nothing of these fellows, Anne tells me, sir?" he queried, for he wondered if they might be hiding something, holding it to be their private business, therefore no concern of his.

The old Pole met his eyes. "Nothing at all."

"They're refugees—or so they say. Zaglul arranged to ship them. Must be some quarrel of their own. There's nothing else for it I can see. Now look. There's no point in starting trouble with them now. We know but they don't know we know. We'll just lie low. When we make port, I'll get the police down quietly."

Nobody questioned this and Fosbery said: "Vaisili was your link with Zaglul. Will this affect your plans?"

"Not if we reach Stamboul," Anne said. Her look was shadowy, as it had been when first they met, before the freedom of the sea had tightened it.

"Then it's all right. I'll see you do."

When Fosbery went on deck Plauen still had the wheel and he observed him with acute new interest, a stumpy massive man in gray wool shirt and denim pants, all muscle and with yellow hair *en brosse* and piglike eyes. His thick hands humoring the wheel, he gazed ahead and gave no sign. It was hard to feel that not eight hours ago he had done murder. The whole affair seemed most unreal.

Yet Vaisili was gone, and Yegor's tale left little room for doubt. . . . Well, there was one precaution he could take.

Artz was still by the dinghy where he had been working, and to make sure he did not intrude while Fosbery was down below, he called the man aft.

Artz, who was carrying the maul for wedging down the hatch-cover, hung back until Fosbery cursed him. Then he put down the maul and came. "Go down and pump the bilge," Fosbery ordered, to keep him aft, and waited till he heard the pump begin to clank.

Fosbery went forward then. He was an active man. To reach the bows it was his way to walk along the main-hatch cover to the dinghy lashed upturned on deck, take a long step to the keel and thence jump down. The others always climbed across.

When his foot struck the keel this time it shot from under him and he fell heavily into the scuppers. A little more to port would have had him overboard; as it was he shook himself in every bone and lay some moments semi-stunned before he scrambled up and, cursing, felt his bruises. Then he turned up his foot to see the sole and ran a finger down the dinghy's keel. At what he found he gave a startled and incredulous frown.

Ten minutes later he emerged out of the fo'c'stle hatch and came back aft.

Anne was there holding to the stays and gazing at the land that took shape fast ahead, her garments molded to her by the steady wind.

He led her to the lee side, where the sail would hide them from the two men aft. "There's more to this thing than we thought. I had a pistol in my kit, and after Vaisili I thought I'd carry it. It's gone. What's more, somebody's searched my bags."

The shadow he had come to know darkened her face. "I felt this was too good to last."

"Oh, it's all right," he covered up. "We'll handle it."

He was about to detail plans but stopped because he raised his head and met Immanuel Artz's eyes. The man had come quietly forward and, between the mast and the jib's red curve, was watching them. As their eyes met, John Fosbery knew that the whole balance on the boat had changed.

Maybe their faces had revealed their thoughts, maybe it was that subtle thing, telepathy, but anyway Artz knew they knew.

Seeing this and also what was in Artz's eyes, Fosbery could tell that everything from then on would be different, and in this light the fact that they were armed and he was not took leading place.

His first reaction was that craft was best: to avoid crisis and by hook or crook to get the *Fritzi Mendl* into port, that was his cue.

But hard on this he had a swift revealing flash, one that shone backward on the movements of Immanuel Artz beginning with his query as to where they'd made their landfall and concluding with his own fall from the dinghy after which he'd found the keel was greased. He had thought at first this had been done in care for it, to keep the wood from drying out. Now, suddenly, he understood.

Once he had brought her to the coast, he was not needed on the *Fritzi Mendl*. So long as it was known which side of the Bosphorus she was, Plauen could take her in from there. He saw it crystal clear that he was meant to go the way of Vaisili, and that the greasing of the keel was an attempt to send him in the simplest way. Artz had applied the stuff as soon as he was sure of the position of the boat. He had hoped that the fall might send him overboard but, failing that, a quick crack on the head while he was down would have disposed of him. That was why Artz had been loath to come back aft; he had been waiting with the wedge-maul for the thing to break.

ON Fosbery the effect of this understanding was both deep and swift: As a prisoner in Turkey, he had lived three years in circumstances close to the primordial, housed like a beast, fighting for food out of a common trough, injured to cruelty and violence. Only the strongest had survived and escapes been made only by the utmost ruthlessness.

Faced with this danger, all he had learned throughout those grueling years returned. The feeling of the old grim challenge: "This man's life or mine," came back, and all his instincts rose in answer.

He said to Anne, "Excuse me, will you?" and to Artz: "Get me my glasses. In my bunk."

At first he thought that Artz might balk, but Artz preferred to stay in character as yet and slouched away.

As soon as he had disappeared, Fosbery strolled after him and dropped below.

Searching the bed for glasses that in fact were with Yegor, Artz heard him come, and turned his head.

Before the man could drop his hands, he'd grabbed him by the throat and forced him back across the lower bunk, his weight upon him, and his thumbs set in his jugular, shaking him furiously to sink his grip.

All Artz could do was kick and thrash until his strength gave out.

Then Fosbery let him go, searched him and found an automatic pistol. He pumped in a cartridge to the chamber and stood back.

Artz, gasping back to consciousness, sat up, hands at his throat and dark eyes wild.

Fosbery explained: "I don't know what your game is, but it's up: get that! Any more tricks, and you'll go where you put Vaisili."

Artz did not speak. He lay sprawled against the bunk and felt his throat, his lip raised in a silent snarl.

"Right!" Fosbery said.

He moved the pistol to his other hand and snapped his right up under Artz's chin—if he merely locked him in the fo'c'stle he might hammer on the hatch and warn his partner. Artz collapsed on the bunk. The American pocketed the pistol, glanced in the shaving-mirror to make sure he showed no marks, straightened his hair and went on deck. Anne was there where he'd left her and, quite casually, he went across. "Listen. It's popped. Come aft and lend a hand."

She met his eyes, nodded and got up without hesitation.

He led the way, walked behind Plauen and stuck the pistol in his ribs: "*Hände hoch!*"

As the man's hands went up, the boat fell off, but Anne quickly caught the wheel.

HE relieved Plauen of a pistol and a long sheath-knife. "All right. You can take the wheel." Plauen obeyed, making no sign save that his face appeared to set more stolidly.

Fosbery took Anne amidships by the weather stays, where he could both watch Plauen and be prepared for something else he was anticipating. Then he said: "Now what the devil is all this?"

She hesitated and her face was drawn. Then she pointed north to Nazi Europe. "It's—that over there, reaching out after us."

"Nonsense. You're done with it."

"You don't know it. No one can who hasn't lived where Nazis are."

"Perhaps I can, a bit. I was a prisoner in Turkey once. That's why I did this job."

The statement had a quick effect on her. Her head came up. "Oh," she said, "that was why!" And her face showed pleased surprise, and something even more.

It was the second moment that had come that day when light was cast on matters hitherto obscure. He saw that she'd entirely misunderstood him. He'd helped her but he would not take her cash. There had to be a motive and she had assumed he'd planned on feminine reward in kind. That's why she'd started off so armed against him. And the reason why she'd kissed him as she had that once had been because she felt she owed it to him. His rueful thought that she held her kisses high if one could pay for what he'd done merged with his pleasure at the knowledge that her view of him had been revised.

"Yes," he said, "that's how it is that I speak Turkish and know Zaglul."

She said, and in a tone she had not used before: "Thank you. Thank you so much."

He was about to seize the opening that the moment gave, when it was ended by the sight of Artz's head cautiously rising through the fo'c'stle hatch.

Fosbery had been waiting for this, and he aimed a pistol. "Keep on coming, with your hands up."

Artz stopped a moment, scowling, then perforce obeyed. The American went across and searched him for a second time.

Patting around his body, he exclaimed triumphantly, and from inside his shirt produced what he had hoped to find, his own automatic pistol. Not having found it upon either man when he had searched them, he had known it must have been thrown overboard or hidden in the fo'c'stle, and if the latter, it would reappear this way.

"All right," he told Artz, "down below!"

As Artz bent to obey Fosbery kicked him with much satisfaction, then shut the hatch and snapped the padlock through the hasp.

Pistol in hand, he asked Anne: "Can you handle these?"

"One of my Warsaw cousins taught me."

He produced the others he had taken. "This is the handiest. You'd better have it."

He removed the clip, pumped out the cartridge, put it back in the clip and slid the clip back home.

She took the weapon without comment and put it down inside her dress. He pitched one of the other pistols overboard and pocketed the third. Then, feeling the yawl's head swing, he looked aft and yelled: "Duck!"

With the intention that the boom should knock them overboard, Plauen had suddenly jibbed the boat.

Fosbery tripped Anne, throwing her to the deck, and crouched beside her as the boom whizzed overhead and stopped at the sheet's end with a crash.

"Phew!" Fosbery whistled as they scrambled up.

"He tried to kill us!"

"He did that. Go forward, will you?"

As she obeyed, he went to Plauen, who stood handling the wheel and gazing forward woodenly. "Not a bad try. You'll pay for it. Now put her back."

The fellow put down helm; the mainsail swung across, and the yawl heeled back on to her course.

Fosbery joined Anne. "Well, now we know that one. When you're on deck, stay for'ard. And if you must be aft, watch for the boom. Plauen is dynamite." He did not wish to lock the fellow up and do without a hand in such close waters; and but for the trick just played, he did not think there was much risk. Artz was quite safe below. He'd carry on this way to port.

CHAPTER FIVE

As they approached the land, the wind veered till it settled to a brisk blow, dead ahead, and he was forced to take in sail and fall back on the engine which, against that wind, gave little more than three knots. Working up-coast to find the entrance to the Bosphorus, he had full time to try and think the business out. Try as he would, he could not make head nor tail of it. Nothing about it seemed to fit.

The obvious explanation was the wish to put Yegor in German hands, but that could have been far better done back in Rumania. The motive must be this end, that seemed clear. But what it could be and for what reason Vaisili, the confidant of Zaglul, master-mind of the whole affair, had been got rid of, was a mystery to which he'd found no key by evening, when they rose the lighthouse that marked the entrance to the Bosphorus.

Anne and he stood watching as the wooded brown-and-purple shores drew in, to open up the passage that in eighteen lovely and historic miles comes to Stamboul. When it was time, they hoisted sail, swung south and ran into the channel mouth.

The low sun filled the ancient waterway with golden light. Overtaking them was a handsome steamer of the Soviet's Odessa line, her rail lined with people looking down on them.

Fosbery said: "With this breeze and this current we shall soon be through. Your job is done."

She eyed him gravely. "You mean Grandfather? I hope so, though I shan't feel certain till he's out of Europe. But if it is that's only part, the smallest part, of what there is to do." And once again she had that look he'd come to know.

Later, when he'd been made to doubt her so, he was to think about that moment, to strive to bring it back and to recall just how she spoke because therein might lie the key to everything. He had suspected there was much more on her mind than just the rescue of her grandfather, and the thought now took shape that there must be some link between that other thing, whatever it might be, and recent events.

She was looking at the European shore, quiet in the evening light, with marble villas with their terraces sheer to the water, backed by massed cypresses, with vineyards and gray olive groves clothing the slopes behind.

He was about to ask her what she meant when she looked aft and suddenly her face showed fear.

Overhauling them was a lean dark power-boat with a tall man in the cockpit watching them through glasses. The craft came up until she was abreast some fifteen yards away, then dropped her speed. The tall man put his glasses down and hailed in German, using the *Fritzi Mendl's* name.

Anne gripped his arm. "I know him. He's a Nazi agent."

"All right. It's quite all right. He can't start anything." He nodded to the Russian steamer which was close abeam, while in his mind the explanation of events took shape. Plauen and Artz had sold Yegor but, not having time to have him captured in Rumania, had engineered this interception. How else could the German know the *Fritzi Mendl's* name and that she would be here? Also that was why they'd murdered Zaglul's agent, Vaisili, and tried to kill Fosbery too.

He cupped his hands and yelled back: "Yes?"

The fellow's next shout did not fit his theory: "Vaisili. Tell Simon Vaisili."

"He's not here."

"He sailed with you."

"We lost him—overboard," he answered guardedly.

The man was silent while the two boats pitched along abreast, with the Russian steamer slowly drawing on ahead.

In the pause, Fosbery glanced at Plauen, when his theory received the knock-out blow. For Plauen's habitually stolid face made clear that whatever was the stranger's business, it did not please him. It seemed established that it must be Vaisili, not the others, who had betrayed Yegor.

The tall man hailed again. "I'm from Zaglul. Follow me in."

"No!" Anne protested vehemently. "No!"

Fosbery replied: "Thanks. We'll go on."

"That's dangerous. Everything's been arranged."

"It's a trick," Anne urged. "They're Gestapo."

He called back: "We're all right. Thanks just the same."

The man stood watching them some moments. He glanced toward the shore, then at the Russian steamer with the row of faces looking down on them. Then he raised a hand, the launch gained speed and made a foaming circle toward the shore.

Anne said: "I told you you can never lose those people."

"Of course you can. They're gone, aren't they? You'll sleep at the Tokatlian tonight and you'll be safe. The American consulate will see to that, I'll take good care."

He went aft to Plauen. "Who was that?"

The German growled: "Some Nazi pig."

"You're not a Nazi?"

Plauen shrugged, and there was irony in his reply: "I am in Germany."

"What did he want?"

"The old Pole, I suppose."

"What are you up to? Who was that man and why did you kill Vaisili? Tell me and I'll do what I can for you."

Plauen's face set. "I killed no one!"—and Fosbery knew he would not talk. . . .

Anne was where he had left her, forward of the mast, looking toward the land.

Dark was now near, the west behind the black shapes of the Thracian hills pale green and eastward over Asia stars bright in the velvet sky. The water looked like purple wine and on the shore the villas' white shapes glimmered fairylike.

As Anne stood silhouetted on the west, she suddenly looked so young and lonely that a wave of tenderness swept over him.

He went and stood beside her, but though he sought for words, he found none he could wish to speak. What might be troubling her secret heart he did not know, and the wrong word might hurt more than it helped.

She said: "How did that German know?"

"Maybe he was from Zaglul."

"He watched me in Stamboul. He's a Nazi and a government man."

"Well, Zaglul wouldn't sell you once he'd made a deal with you. He's slippery but he keeps his word. It must have been Vaisili. He had Zaglul's confidence."

"Why, yes," she said; "that must be why they killed him. They're refugees as well as us. He sold us and they found it out."

"They would have told us, wouldn't they? It can't be that. They tried to murder us. Don't worry. We'll be in by midnight. It will come out then."

After a while she went below while he remained on deck, keeping a wary eye on Plauen and trying to sum up the situation.

Without Vaisili, he had no means of knowing Zaglul's plans, whether he thought that once Yegor was in Stamboul he would be safe or whether he'd planned on further secrecy. His own opinion was that Stamboul could be made quite safe until Yegor was on a ship bound for America. But for all the reassurance he had given Anne, a small voice whispered: "Maybe Zaglul *had* sold out—"

He'd play this safe. He'd berth in secret at the wharf before his own hotel, where he was known, and get a car to take Yegor—

Dark was now almost full, the Russian steamer far ahead and the *Fritzi Mendl* quite alone. Suddenly astern he saw a line of white that grew into the bow-wave of a powerboat, coming up at a tearing pace. As she roared up he recognized her and made out the shapes of men crouched at her rail and knew it was a rush to board.

Reaching for his gun he yelled to Plauen, "Hard aport!" But Plauen did not obey. Instead, his dark form stooped and picked up something from the deck, and as the launch reversed he tossed it underneath her stern, at the same time bringing around the yawl sharply to port.

Instead of following, the launch lost speed and fell away.

That was the last that Fosbery saw, because his interest had given to Plauen a watched-for chance. Eying the launch and wondering what had made her stop, a wavering of the yawl told Fosbery that the helm was free. He looked around, to see the German's squat dark figure hurtling at him.

He tried to dodge, but Plauen's weight hit him full and knocked him overboard.

Anne, hearing the launch roar up, had put her head out of the well in time to see Plauen's attack. Her scream rang out as Plauen, with agility surprising in so squat a man, leaped back to seize the wheel and cram the yawl back on the wind.

She sprang on deck, holding on by the stays and staring at the darkness astern. Then she whipped round, ordering Plauen: "Go back for him!"

He ignored her

She produced her pistol: "Do what I say."

Plauen growled, "He can swim. They'll pick him up," and held straight on.

She stood there impotent. The pistol was no help for Plauen guessed rightly that she would not use it save in self-defense. She could not get the wheel because she did not dare go close enough for him to get his hands on her.

Fosbery was gone, and she must stay on deck and not let Plauen come close enough for any risk or pass her to go forward to release the other man.

CHAPTER SIX



OSBERY came gasping to the surface; when he'd cleared his eyes he saw the *Fritzi Mendl*'s lights heeling off down the Bosphorus and close at hand the dark form of the launch wallowing, halted, with German curses rolling from the men grouped at her stern.

He trod water and thought fast. The yawl was out of reach, he was a mediocre swimmer, there was a three-mile current and the shore was half a mile away. His sole chance of survival was the launch. If she went off and left him there he'd drown.

There was only one thing to do. He swam round to her stern and hailed, and in the dark the men turned startled faces to him and then hauled him out.

A torch was flashed in his face and a voice he recognized said in English: "Well! And how did you get in the sea?"

Chagrined and dripping, dazzled by the light, Fosbery declined to say more than he must. He growled: "I tripped up, in the dark."

The German looked down-channel where the yawl had gone: "They'll be back after you?" he hazarded.

"Nobody saw."

"Really. Well, it's too bad, after the clever trick you pulled."

"What trick?"

"Throwing the rope into my screw."

So that was what Plauen did! Plauen was smarter than he looked, by far.

He did not answer and the German said: "Well! So the mountain's come to Mahomet. But first I'll have to fix my screw." His manner was quite easy but his tone was hard. "Better go down below before you get pneumonia. You'll find blankets in the bunks and brandy in the locker. Help yourself." He led him to the cabin entrance, thrusting him down. "You'll excuse me. I must get her going."

Fosbery was cold and there was nothing else that he could do. He went down to a well-appointed cabin with a center table and bunks at either side. He found brandy, took a stiff drink, then shed his dripping clothes and wrapped himself in blankets. But he took his belt, tied his pistol to it with his handkerchief and strapped it round his waist.

Seated at the table with his drink, concern enveloped him. Anne on the yawl with nothing but a pistol between her and Plauen, with Yegor to care for, Stamboul to make and the issue that had caused a murder still unsolved on board! The acuteness of her peril chilled him but he was impotent to give her help.

Wrapped in the blankets, he sat gnawed by apprehension until presently the engine started. He looked out through a porthole as they neared the western shore and presently the new-risen moon revealed them heading for a large white villa among splendid trees, whose terrace rose sheer from the water in a little cove. There was a water-gate beneath the terrace under which they passed into a boathouse where they disembarked.

In the light, Fosbery took his first look at his host, or captor,—he was not sure which,—with lively interest. He was a strong-faced, handsome man of thirty-odd with blue eyes, fair hair and mustache. He wore sea-boots, a thick

white sweater and a leather windbreaker. But for a subtle accent in his speech he might have been an Englishman, but for his arrogance an American. As it was he was unmistakably a German of the Junker sort. He was one of the men who had been sitting close to Anne the day he'd met her in the Tokatlian, and against the chance of being overheard by whom, he had been warned.

"Well?" he said. "Are you warmer now? This way." And he led Fosbery up a stair and through a door into the round, domed hallway of a house which mingled fine taste with strong Oriental atmosphere: white walls tiled head-high in bright greens and blues, bulbously-pointed arches having tapestries instead of doors, silk rugs in glowing colors and a restful air.

A crop-haired servant clicked his heels and the German told him: "Get this gentleman a hot bath and some clothes till his are dried."

In half-an-hour, dry, warm and wearing not too badly fitting clothes, Fosbery descended to the hall again.

Beyond one arch, someone was playing on a piano a Schubert serenade.

He walked into a lounge whose windows opened on the terrace, beyond which he could see the Bosphorus, with the lights twinkling on the Asiatic shore, the low moon and the starry sky. He stood and heard his host, who was the player, through. The man had changed and looked extremely smart and soldierly. He turned his head and sprang up. "My dear chap! Please excuse me. Come in and have a drink."

There was a tray of caviar and liquor. "What'll it be? Sherry? Vermouth? Gin and It? I hope you don't find those clothes too bad."

Pouring the drinks, he said: "You know, you were a surprise to me. When I heard they'd got an American to bring that boat down, I didn't think of you. I expected some deck-hand."

His tone was easy but his listener could not forget the men crouched at the launch's rail as she'd roared up and the harsh order given a man who'd driven a car away while he was changing. But his best line obviously was to meet the fellow at his own game, so he said: "You were pretty well informed, at that."

"I try to be. Let me introduce myself: Otto Lutwein, of the German-Balkan Economic Mission, at your service."

"John Fosbery, late of the New York *Bugle*, now freelancing."

"Indeed? A first-class sheet, the *Bugle*. I used to love their cartoonist—Spender, wasn't it? I was in New York five years." He raised his glass: "Well, here's to our better acquaintance. If you hadn't been so stand-offish I'd have had the pleasure earlier. I suppose, though, I should have waited for you at the dock."

He paused then, sipping his drink and watching Fosbery. The thing was not well done and Fosbery saw it was a try to find out where he'd planned to dock the boat.

He countered: "Well, it's worked out as you wanted now. What can I do for you?"

"You know quite well."

"I'm afraid I don't."

Lutwein paused, studying him. Then he made up his mind. "Look, Fosbery. The time's too short for cat-and-mouse. I'll give you better pickings than those Poles will do. All I want is to know where they will dock. No one will ever know you told. I don't know what they're paying you but I'll double it."

The blatancy of the tactics startled Fosbery, and the man mistook the meaning of his hesitation. "Or you can name your price. Cash on the dock when she's tied up."

"Nobody's paying me. And I should think you could find some better job than chivvying a sick old man."

The effect of this remark was curious. Lutwein regarded him as though unable to believe his ears, and then he said: "You think that I'm concerned with old Prynski? Politics?" And once more Fosbery heard Anne's

words: "That's only part, the smallest part, of what I have to do."

He said: "That's what I thought."

"You're in this out of sentiment? 'American saves Polish patriot from wicked Nazis.' The charming Anne sold you that?"

Fosbery's face was his reply, and the German declared in mock awe: "Well! So chivalry is not dead!" And then he laughed. He laughed and laughed till tears ran down his face.

Fosbery said dangerously: "If you'll explain it, maybe I can laugh."

Still laughing, Lutwein shook his head. "What you don't know can't hurt you, Fosbery. And anyway, I couldn't spoil it. It's too beautiful. But"—and he suddenly grew sober—"there's five thousand in it for you if you'll tell me where you planned to dock."

Through his chagrin and anger Fosbery saw that now if ever was the time to learn. "Five thousand is a lot of cash. I'd have to know what I was selling, though."

Lutwein grinned. "No! I think not. Freedom is saved, the maiden succored and the Stars and Stripes wave over all. Leave it at that. You're not the first man to be sucked in by a pretty woman. You can save your feelings with a cool five thousand and no questions asked. And don't think you'll be selling old Prynski. I've not the slightest interest in him, I promise you."

Checking the urge to hit him, Fosbery countered; "The only way you could convince me is by saying what you are after."

Lutwein considered this, then shook his head. "On the whole, I think I'll keep it to myself. I'll double the bid. Ten thousand if you'll take me down to meet the boat. I have a fast car, and can make it if we start now."

"It's worth that much to see you don't," Fosbery replied with heat.

"Twenty!" . . . At last Lutwein shrugged. "Still a Boy Scout, are you? I knew the strain was strong in you Americans, but not that strong. Well, I'll be glad to send you into Pera when you wish to go."

CHAPTER SEVEN



HERE can be few roads more lovely than the one to Pera down the west shore of the Bosphorus. During the great days of the Sultanate it bore the traffic to the pashas' pleasure-houses. In that rich, spurious age they built here exquisitely for their favorites, laid out their baths and gardens, and in them took respite from the intrigues of the imperial court.

As the car Lutwein had provided purred along, John Fosbery saw the villas of the Old Turks gleam in the moon among the cypresses; dark roadside banks were gemmed with glow-worms, and the air was heavy with a scent of autumn in which jasmine, late roses, wood-smoke and bursting grapes mingled their essences. At one point he heard the twang of zithers and a quavering song.

He sat in the corner of the car and tried to separate his reasoning from his emotions: Anne Bryan had made a tool of him, and his resentment was far greater than was normal for the character of their relationship. Nor did it lessen his concern for her, which was insistent and intense.

Where was she now, and was she safe? With what was she concerned which the Nazis would pay twenty thousand to discover? And had Zaglul shared in her deception of him, or had she hoodwinked also that old fox?

One thing was overriding in his mind—the urgent need to find the boat; and as that was Lutwein's object too, he must make sure that he did not betray her whereabouts while doing so.

At the outskirts of the town, the chauffeur asked for orders, and Fosbery kept him on through Pera, down the

steep seaport road and thence across Galata bridge to Old Stamboul. He was sure that Lutwein had released him in the hope that he would lead him to the thing he sought, but doubted if the German knew how real was his acquaintance with the Stamboul slums. He turned the car out of the traffic of the Rue de la Sublime Porte into a side-road, and therefrom into a black slit of a street but little wider than the car itself. The street was empty, and contained the backs of shops; it angled left and then bore right till the lights shone on a dead end at a warehouse door.

To leave, the car would have to back, and in the dark it would need help. He told the driver, "Wait here. I may be some time,"—and wondered how long it would be before he realized that he'd been marooned. Then Fosbery went back round the bend and slipped into an alley that ran crookedly between warped and ancient walls. The cobbles and the slime he trod, the reeks, the sounds that penetrated from the busy lanes, brought memories back. Here in this labyrinth he'd lived for months, a prisoner escaped but still trapped in a hostile city, looking with hungry eyes on life he dared not show himself to share.

To have followed where he went thereafter, would have taxed a rat. Westward he wound through thronged bazaar and teeming street, alley and court, until the slums ran out to avenues five centuries old, with eyeless walls and jutting balconies, standing among great cypresses and Judas trees, and graveyards with cracked, leaning stones all black and silver in the moonlight; then he passed an arch into a lobby where a watchman slept before a studded door.

After some argument, the American gained admittance into Zaglul's house, where a servant left him in a room that was a sad example of the bane of modernism grafted on an ancient thing. This was the women's work, he guessed. This low whitewashed room had fine carved doors, but shiny store furniture, red plush and gaudy knick-knacks mingled profusely with fine Balkan things in an effect in sorry contrast with the austere beauty Zaglul kept in the bazaar.

But they could not detract from Zaglul's dignity.

After a wait, through which the visitor heard women's talk and German vaudeville on a radio, that beak-nosed patriarch of devious affairs appeared.

He was dressed, as always, in white robes and gold-laced skullcap; and his lined, buff-hued face was quite impassive till he recognized his visitor. Then, through surprise, he smiled with satisfaction. "This is an unexpected pleasure. I had no idea you were back. Please sit down."

As his guest complied, he took a chair himself, and said courteously: "I hope you had a pleasant trip."

Now was the likeliest chance of learning if he shared Anne's secret; and controlling his desire to take a stronger line, Fosbery replied: "An interesting one, at any rate." "So?"

"Yes. I got the notion there might be a lot more to it than just bringing out Prynski."

"Oh? In what way?"

"There were some curious things. My crew, for instance. They weren't sailors."

Zaglul looked mystified. "Excuse me, please."

"Weren't they your men?"

"Vaisili is my agent in Rumania. He engaged them."

This clinched one issue: Vaisili, Anne and Zaglul had all three disclaimed responsibility for these fellows' presence on the *Fritzi Mendl*. One of them lied. But for the time, he let that matter pass. He said; "Well, then, he bungled it. The men were useless. They were refugees. If Miss Prynski hadn't helped me sail, we should have been in trouble when it blew, one time."

Zaglul was all concern. "Indeed? I am very sorry. I shall speak to Vaisili. It is not like him. But all's well that ends well, is it not?"

"This hasn't ended well."

Zaglul grew still, his subtle eyes on Fosbery's.

Watching those eyes, so clear in that pale, deep-lined face, Fosbery told Zaglul everything, and knew it moved him to his depths.

It was not that the expression of his face betrayed it; that stayed impassive as though carved in wax. But as the tale was told, the American felt the fury in the old man rise as pressure in a boiler grows. His tension came to Fosbery like a wave of heat, and though he sat quite still, his struggle to control himself was plainly felt.

And it was won. By no sign did he show what he heard might mean to him. Only his eyes were live, like fire.

When Fosbery stopped, he broke out, quick and harsh: "They must be found. I am responsible."

"What's going on? What was on board worth twenty thousand?"

Zaglul was silent. Then he stated: "The Prynskis."

"Lutwein swore it wasn't."

"Lies are the Nazis' favorite tool."

"But the old man's through. He isn't worth it. Even at home, he couldn't do much. Outside, he's harmless."

"There is the girl. You've seen her quality. The family have always been in politics. During the Russian occupation, it was they who kept revolt alive; and they will still. With her connections and American protection, if she's plotting with the Poles, she's dangerous. And she'll have information that they'll torture out of her."

NOT Yegor but Anne? It was a startling thought that he saw at once fitted in. Lutwein swore he did not want Yegor, but he had not mentioned Anne. Fosbery heard again her voice, and saw her eyes as she had said: "*That's only part, the smallest part of it.*" That's what she must have meant. How dense he'd been!

But if the answer to the business was a Nazi plot, what of Plauen and Artz? How did their killing Vaisili and other of their acts fit in?

When he put this to Zaglul, he, from whom all sign of feeling had now disappeared, replied: "If the Nazis would pay you for her, they would also pay them, wouldn't they? They knew about the business somehow, lied to Vaisili to ship as crew, got rid of him and tried to kill you too. The Nazis would not part with money, once they had got their prisoner. That's why these fellows ran last night. They're taking her to hiding. Then they'll come in, and make a bargain, and get out of Europe."

"But how did they and Lutwein know? Especially he! How could they know that she was coming out—when and where from and how?"

The veteran of a thousand intrigues shrugged, and spread his long white hands. "What betrays any plan?"

He sat for some moments with his mouth compressed, then came to life. "We must find the boat. I undertook to bring these people here. What sort of boat was it? Describe her to me. I'll spread the word. The police and the American consulate must help. I'll get permission for an airplane." With swift incisiveness he detailed plans to search the entire confluence of the Bosphorus and the Marmora.

Back in his quarters at the Greek's again, Fosbery discovered that his main reaction was one of relief. Resentment at the thought of Anne treated as merchandise was offset by his satisfaction at the knowledge that she'd not deceived him. She'd said enough to tell him that she was devoted to the Polish cause; and the fact that she had not told how deep her interest was could not be held remiss by him. The terms of their relationship did not demand such confidence.

After the disposal of that matter, he felt easier. Things were not bad. Plauen would take all care of such a valuable prisoner; and to hide her, get in touch with Lutwein and conclude his deal would take some time. That time was his and Zaglul's chance. They had by hook or crook to find the boat.

He had described Lutwein's house to Zaglul and the old schemer would be watching it. With his reputation for reliability at stake, Zaglul would leave no move unmade; and there was a contribution he himself could make. But that could not be started till the fishing fleet came in, and so he walked back to the Greek's and tried to get some sleep. . . .

After some restless hours, the American rose, left the hotel at dawn and made his way along the wharves to where the fishing caiques docked their catch, much higher up.

It was now half-light, and the fleet was not yet in. The heights of Pera rampartlike against the dawn, the sheds' rank smell, the waiting ox-drawn carts and the market women—these took him back to the nights he'd known here years ago with genial Nick Carabis, netting the waters of the Horn while waiting for his exit from Stamboul to be arranged. If anyone could find the *Fritzi Mendl*, it was Nick and his companions of the fishing fleet. Waiting for them, Fosbery paced the rotting planks and pondered on the strangeness of life; also upon an unfamiliar feeling he experienced whenever his mind turned upon Anne Bryan, daughter of America, who was also the child true-bred of Polish patriots.

The east was gold before he heard the motors' stutter and the dim shape of the first lateen-rigged craft loomed through the mist. The women separated and took up their creels; the big white oxen stirred; and as the sun's rim slid up over Asia, all down the wharf the day began.

Nick was a black-curbed, burly fellow with a broad brown face, white teeth and fierce mustachios, a cousin of the Greek's who, twenty years ago, had sheltered Fosbery after his escape from prison. Nick cared for neither creed nor politics, but only for good fellowship. After the days dragged out in hiding, nights on the open Horn with him had been a foretaste of the freedom Fosbery hungered for; and when he'd reached Stamboul this time, he'd called on Nick and they'd spent another night over their wine.

When Nick saw Fosbery he hailed him boisterously, leaving the unloading to his men and going with him to a café where the coffee steamed and mutton frizzled ready for the hungry crews.

When he had heard Fosbery's tale, Nick asked: "What sort of boat is this?"

Fosbery told him. Nick replied: "Hard boat to spot. Many just like. Villains like these would hide her name."

Then, seeing his troubled face, Nick slapped his shoulder. "Never mind. You lose your girl—I get for you another one. Fine girl—black eyes." His hands outlined a buxom shape. "Two if you like!" But Fosbery shook his head.

"You only want that one?" Nick shrugged. "So! Some fellows are like that. Me, if they're fat and willing and don't nag, I don't care who they are. All right. I pass the word. Fifty *mejideahs* reward. We find the girl for you."

THERE was a chance, Fosbery thought, that for a certain reason the yawl might be identified more easily than Nick expected, and he explained how this might be. He breakfasted with Nick and talked until at nine he left to go up to the consulate. The inquiry desk sent him upstairs. Up there, a girl was being shown out of an office, a nice girl in a smart blue suit who had her back to him. When she turned, his jaw dropped. It was Anne!

He got out: "Holy smokel! And here I am raising Cain all over town to start a hunt for you. What happened?"

"Plauen said if I'd promise not to give alarm, he'd put us off. I promised, and he landed us at a ferry pier. I just came here to tell them you were lost before I went to Zaglul. Thank heaven, you're safe. What happened?"

"It's quite a tale. Let's go somewhere."

"We must tell Grandfather. He's so concerned. He feels responsible for you. We're at the Tokatlian."

In a cab heading up for Pera, Fosbery told Anne his story—including Lutwein's accusation.

Her face revealed only indignation. "That's not true." "But—please forgive me—one day when I said your grandfather was safe, you did say that was only part, the smallest part, of what was on your mind, and all along you'd seemed that way."

"Oh, yes. I meant the war. This Nazi horror must be stopped."

"Then it's true. They do want you."

For some moments she considered this, and then she said: "They might, though all I've done so far is help Grandfather. But they've let me go."

That was a point that in his great relief he'd missed. Now its significance came home to him; and he eyed her, nonplused. Then he said: "Then why—why everything? Killings and twenty-thousand-dollar bribes! What for?"

If she was indeed involved in what these meant, she hid it well. "Some trouble with that German and those men. Must be. The main thing is that everything's come out all right. I could never have forgiven myself if you'd been killed."

Her voice had a tone that drew from him a sudden look. She met it, then blushed and lowered her eyes, and suddenly his heart beat fast.

In a strange way, the happening turned his thoughts back to his own affairs, putting an accent on his rootlessness. Money was short. A fellow needed it. He had to get to work.

The journalist in him awoke. He said: "There's a story in this; I must run it down. What pier did they land you at?"

"The Hamideah. On the other side. We came over on the ferry."

"Scutari side, eh? That's a point. I ought to tell my scout. Do you mind if we go now?"

He leaned to tell the driver, but she touched his arm. "I really should tell Grandfather you're safe. He's so upset. And we both need sleep. I know I do. Do what you have to do, and then get some. Come up tonight and dine with me."

"You dine with me."

"No. Please. You've done too much for us already. Let me do this. We'll have a party. Dress, and we'll celebrate. I'll make them do American food."

It was not hard for him to yield, "All right," he said, and with a queer sensation that the world had suddenly grown new, he got out, caught another cab and drove down to the fishing wharf, where he luckily caught Nick and told him that the boat was last seen on the eastern side of the Bosphorus.

Now that Zaglul's assertion that Anne had been the cause of everything appeared disproved, matters looked different; and, curious to know what he would have to say, Fosbery headed for the Covered Bazaar.

He found the old man as he'd always known him in his business hours, crosslegged on a carpet, with his massive books. Though he bowed in his punctilious way, his eyes, on Fosbery's, were intent. "You have some news?"

"They're in. They're at the Tokatlian."

Usually so secretive, Zaglul could be the openest of men. Relief and satisfaction, plainly mingled with surprise, were on his face. "Indeed? Splendid!"

"Your ideas about Miss Bryan haven't worked out."

Zaglul's eyes veiled a trifle. "How do you mean?"

As Fosbery started to explain, Zaglul's face set. He rapped: "You don't know where the boat is?"

"No." He told him why, and once more felt the tension in the old man rise. But with impassive face he sat as still as stone and asked: "Where were they put ashore?"

"The Hamideah pier. Scutari side."

Zaglul received the statement silently, and Fosbery said: "What do you make of it?"

For some time Zaglul did not answer. Then he said: "I was wrong, that's clear. It must be these two men. You say they're refugees. They must be important, and

the Gestapo is after them. They know it functions here, and would be waiting—so they had to keep outside at any cost."

The explanation was so valid as to bring a sense of anticlimax to a journalist in search of news.

Zaglul went on: "About this boat: The insurance does not cover piracy. That's what this is. If she is lost, the Poles will have to pay for her. You would be serving them, if you would keep on doing what you can, and let me know if you hear anything."

Wondering how bad a blow to Anne and Yegor such a demand would be, he was about to tell him what he'd just told Carabis, when he was interrupted by the entrance of a sleek young man in Paris clothes of flamboyant cut.

But it was not his gaudiness that startled Fosbery. It was his face.

From the day he'd met Immanuel Artz, he had been puzzled by a likeness in him which he could not name. But for his age, this young man might have been his twin. The likeness which they both held to another was one not of feature but of quality, which was no doubt why he had failed to place it but could do so now. The revelation was made certain by the voice of Zaglul: "This is my third son, Yusuf, Mr. Fosbery."

While Fosbery's mind raced, he shook hands with the silky boy. Then, for the first time in his knowledge, Zaglul made a blunder. Excusably, for it was in the last degree unusual, Zaglul forgot that this American had learned the patois of the Stamboul underworld. The old man said: "Excuse me for a moment. Business!" And then he gabbled with Yusuf in that obscure dialect—an exchange that jolted Fosbery to his depths.

CHAPTER EIGHT



WHEN the boy went, Fosbery also, as quickly as he could without appearing hasty, took leave. Threading his way among the scents and color of the old bazaar, he viewed the situation in a great new light:

Zaglul had lied, he knew now, not only recently but from the start, using his willingness to help a fugitive to consummate some private scheme. As with so many in Stamboul for seventy years, the answer to the whole queer puzzle lay with him.

One of the things he'd shot at Yusuf in a jargon probably no two Americans could understand had been: "The Poles are in. Mani, the dog, still has the boat! Find her at any cost."

Now Fosbery knew his tale was hot, red-hot. No wonder that his news had been received with rage by Zaglul, who so fiercely prized his reputation. For *Mani* is the Turkish nickname for *Immanuel*, and he knew now that the man who'd called himself Immanuel Artz was actually Immanuel ibn Zaglul, Zaglul's eldest son. Fosbery had known his name but never met him. It was the boat, not the Pryanskis, that had Zaglul's interest. Out of the Danube in the *Fritzi Mendl* had been brought some dark concern for which Immanuel ibn Zaglul had betrayed his father, for which Plauen had murdered Vaisili, for which a Nazi agent would pay twenty thousand—and of which the Pryanskis had professed their ignorance. Professed! Could they have lied? This was the thought that reared itself, with growing force.

It was days since he had had a bath or proper rest, and as he'd done all he could and must await developments, he went to do his thinking at a Turkish bath.

He had a sweat and a massage, but he was far from getting rest. Instead, excitement gripped him, and he knew it came far less from what he'd learned at Zaglul's than because tonight he was to dine with Anne.

Women were no new thing to him. He'd liked them. They'd liked him. He had several times been close enough

to one for marriage, but had shied away because before too late he'd felt a vital lack in their relationship. Now he was feeling something new in his experience, that brought him an excitement that he could not down.

By the time Fosbery left the baths, it was almost five, and as he headed for the Greek's, he had a sense of most delectable anticipation. Dressing, he found that he was singing, and he blushed at it. Was she as eager as he was, he asked himself. What would she wear? The thought of seeing her in evening dress gave him a thrill through which the question of her being in some plot with Zaglul seemed but dim. . . .

At seven he left word where he might be found; and soon, well groomed, trim, sunburned from the sea, a first-rate figure of a man, had sent his name up from the counter at the Tokatlion. He had a sheaf of roses, and felt excited as a boy.

The clerk said he was asked upstairs; and going up, he found Yegor in bed, propped up on pillows with a writing-pad. As he came in, the old man showed relief. John Fosbery said: "Good evening, sir. May I congratulate you on your safe arrival?"

"Thank you. Thank you. We owe it all to you. Thank God you're safe! I could never have forgiven myself if you'd been lost."

The old man's eyes were on the door, and he inquired: "But where is Anne?"

"I don't know, sir."

Yegor looked puzzled. "You've been together?"

"Not since this morning."

"But you telephoned for her."

"Why, no!"

They looked at one another, and Yegor explained: "She'd been back half an hour when someone phoned and said you wanted her at Zaglul's and had sent a car. She left in that, and hasn't been back."

Fosbery said, startled: "I was at Zaglul's, but I sent no car."

"Well, someone did."

"Someone who knew that I was there."

"But who? Why? That was eight hours ago. Where can she be?"

Though he could not imagine to what end it might have been, his first thought was that this was Zaglul's work. But then he saw that it was far too crude. That master of diplomacy would not work so. His second thought seemed likelier, and his hackles rose.

Quickly he said: "Had Anne told you about this German and what happened to me?"

"She had just finished when the call came in."

"What do you make of it?" He eyed Pryanski measuringly.

"I do not understand."

"Do you know anything of this Lutwein?"

"Not by that name. But there are many Germans we Pryanskis have had trouble with."

There was a long, strained silence. Fosbery had a bad sense of his lack of standing in this odd affair. He felt a dupe and stranger, moving uncertainly outside the orbit of some dark concern of whose participants, it came to him, he could know nothing. He looked at the old Slav rebel, with his tossed white hair and burning eyes. What did he know of him and Anne, their motives or their processes? How could he judge of them? Maybe they had concealed some vital matter from the start.

His second thought upon Anne's disappearance grew in force; and suddenly his face looked as it had when he strangled Artz. He said: "There's one thing sure—Anne would not stay like this if she were free. That's kidnapping. I'll see to it. I'll take this town apart. I'll get the consulate. And the police. I'll wire the embassy. I'll cable Washington—"

As he took up the phone, his mind raced. There was a knock. It was a page-boy with a note.

Dear Fosbery:

I happened to be dining here and heard you were about. I love New York and should enjoy a talk with anyone who knows it well. Suppose you join me, if you've nothing else to do. Shall we say cocktails in the bar at seven?

Sincerely,

Otto Lutwein.

He passed the message to Yegor. "The answer's here."

CHAPTER NINE



ATURDAY night at the Tokatlan in wartime Stamboul shows a colorful and active scene. Mingling with modern Turks and Balkan folk, are foreigners of every sort that war attracts, dining with women of most grades from wives to courtesans. Money is free, the atmosphere electric; and beneath the gayety run devious tides. Business and graft, diplomacy, espionage and grimmer things ebb and flow there in a dark, swirling stream.

When, after doing all he could do to start a search for Anne, Fosbery sought Lutwein in the bar, he saw the German, blond and virile, with a beautiful Rumanian girl. He left her with a bow when he saw Fosbery. Coming to meet him, Lutwein said: "Ah! I'm so glad. But,"—seeing his dinner clothes,—"I'm sorry I'm not dressed."

His pause contained a question to which Fosbery did not rise. This was a deep and tricky business, and he'd play it so. Lutwein would have to lead. So, though he itched to be direct, he said: "I thought you might intend to, so I chanced it. Sorry."

"My dear chap, not at all. What will you drink?"

Watching each other like two fighting dogs through small-talk, they consumed a cocktail. Then, maintaining the pretense of hospitality, Lutwein said: "Shall we go in?"

The ornate restaurant was crowded, buzzing with chatter and blue-hazed with smoke. A gypsy orchestra played nostalgic tunes.

Lutwein had passed across the menu when an unlucky turn forced Fosbery to expose his hand. The *maitre d'hôtel* appeared beside him. "Excuse me, sir. Aren't you the gentleman who was to dine with Miss Pryanski? She told me when she ordered dinner—very special, everything *Américain*, with flowers." He pointed to a table marked, *Reserved*, and with a handsome centerpiece.

Fosbery had to answer, "Yes."

"It got so late I telephoned her room, and I understand she has been called away. I wondered if you'd like the dinner served to you?"

Lutwein, who had listened with lively interest, put in: "Mr. Fosbery is my guest, André. By all means let us have it. I had planned an American evening too, though I fear not so charmingly."

Fosbery could have choked him. He went on: "It seems that I owe your company to Miss Pryanski's absence. May I ask how that is?"

There was no further dissembling. "I think you know."

"I? Why?"

"She's disappeared."

"How do you mean?"

Their eyes met, and they measured one another. Fosbery said: "You tell me."

The waiter came with oysters and a half of Chablis, and Lutwein did not answer then but addressed himself to eating. Then he said: "I've no idea what can have happened to her, but I've—connections here. If you'd give me some help, I might ask them to help you search for her."

So that was it!

"I don't know where the boat is, if that's what you mean."

"Old Pryanski does."

"He doesn't."

"But she brought them in."

"They were put ashore at the Hamideah ferry pier. The crew have stolen the boat."

As the waiter placed consommé, Lutwein said: "You don't look such a chump—really, you don't. Don't you see that yarn was just their way of keeping you away from her? They don't want you to see what's going on."

This was a brand-new notion, and it silenced Fosbery while he viewed things in its novel light.

Lutwein went on: "It seems that I misjudged you, Fosbery. Up at my house, I wasn't quite convinced, but I am now. You did go north to help these people out of sentiment. They got your confidence, and you've never doubted them."

"If they lied, tell me how."

Apparently considering this, Lutwein refilled the glasses. Then, not answering the challenge, he went on: "If Anne isn't found, it wouldn't surprise me if she did end up in Germany. After all, she's a Pryanski, and they're dynamite. We've ships up-Danube all the time. Tell the old man that Zaglul's late lamented Vaisili kept us informed. He had a nice wife in Sofia, so he thought it might be wise to serve the Reich. But it seems Zaglul's people found him out. That's why they killed him. That old weasel will be dealt with when we're running Turkey. And remind Pryanski that the police won't move without some evidence, and you have none. My word's as good as yours; maybe a little better, this close to the Luftwaffe."

Fosbery's eyes had a steely glint. "As to that, we'll see. Remember the lady's an American."

Lutwein's admission of the fact contained disparagement of all it meant, and Fosbery's wrath was near a break when he saw something that brought him up short.

From where he sat, he had a view of the reception-desk, and at this had appeared the shirt-sleeved figure of Nick Carabis. The clerk's face showed that he did not like Nick. Doubtless Nick's aura of ripe fish and garlic troubled him. Showing a backside like an elephant's, Nick leaned across the desk and harangued him with flailing arms.

Seated with his back to it, Lutwein could not see this. Forcing himself to be deliberate, Fosbery stood up. "All right. I'll tell Pryanski."

Lutwein nodded. "Anything I can do to help—"

Once in the lobby, Fosbery turned as if to take the elevator but instead ran down a stairway to the lavatories, whence he took another stair to the street. He jumped into a cab and sent the driver in for Nick.

When Nick, smiling, all teeth and big brown eyes, climbed in, he told the driver, "Seraglio Gardens," and then turned to him. Nick laughed: "All day I'm telling everyone to look out for your boat. Just now in Shemshi Dauda's shop, a prawner says she came in with the fleet today."

"In with the fleet?" he said incredulously.

"Yes. This morning when you met me. She was to port of him the whole way in, flying the flags you said. Queer bunting for a fish-boat. The whole crew noticed."

Then Fosbery knew it must be true. For what he'd told Nick might identify the *Fritzi Mendl* was the flying on her halliards of a brassière, two silk stockings and a pair of panties. Each night Anne washed and hauled her one change up to dry; they had been there at dark; and he had thought that in the distraction of that night, she might have left them, and two men intent upon escape might not have noticed them when daylight came, at least at first.

Suddenly he was furious. So the yawl *had* brought Anne in, and Lutwein told the truth! She and Yegor had lied to him and tricked him. They were in league with Zaglul in some secret scheme. Nothing was as it seemed, and he'd been made a dupe and a convenience.

But none of it changed his feeling at the fact that Anne might soon be in a concentration-camp.

To help her, he had to know the truth, and there was one way he could get at it. Zaglul would never speak unless it suited him, but there were ways to sting a firebrand like Pryanski into an explanation.

He stopped the cab and put Nick out, saying that he would meet him later in the café at the fishing wharf, then drove back to the Tokatlian, reentered by the side door and went up to the Pryanskis' rooms.

Standing beside Yegor and just arrived, he found an elderly small man with deep-lined leathery face and Vandyke beard. Yegor introduced him: "May I present an old friend and compatriot, Bolko Slomniki. . . . "This is Mr. Fosbery, Bolko, an American gentleman to whom we owe our presence here. He came up to Rumania especially to bring us out."

"Then let me thank him on behalf of every Pole." The little man shook hands. "I had just heard through our consulate that my old friend had got away, and came to call on him. Poland needs all such men."

There was a pause then, Fosbery hesitating to make known his business. Pryanski told his caller: "We are in trouble, Bolko. Anne has disappeared. We fear the Nazis have her."

He told Fosbery: "You may speak freely, sir. Mr. Slomniki is the leader of the Free Poles here."

Fosbery asked him: "Will you please answer me a question, with your word on it?"

The old man said surprisedly: "I'll try."

"Had you any motive on our trip beside your own escape, some secret that you shared with Zaglul?"

"Indeed no."

"You had nothing on the boat that the Nazis want, and that you left on board?"

Pryanski's puzzlement was plain. "Certainly not," he answered; and despite the looks of things, Fosbery found himself convinced.

He asked him: "One more question, if you will. Do you know where the boat is?"

"I do not. Why do you ask these things?"

Fosbery explained, while on Pryanski's face grew consternation and bewilderment. "I do not understand. To us, this boat is nothing. Zaglul provided it—"

Slomniki said sharply: "You don't mean the old Armenian in the Covered Bazaar?"

"Yes. I knew him from the days we worked against the Russians; and when we stranded in Galatz, I sent my granddaughter to him for help. She has American papers and can travel so. He arranged everything."

In a curious tone Slomniki said: "Tell me all of this."

Fosbery gave him the story from the start, the small man listening with silent interest until he came to Lutwein's offer of the twenty thousand. Then he held up his hand. "You need go no further. This is extraordinary. When Warsaw was about to fall, the Polish government shipped its gold, in small lots, different ways. One lot was got as far as Katowitz, and there lay hidden. Like you, some of us here had dealt with Zaglul in the old Russian days, and we commissioned him to bring it out. He had a free hand, and he told us yesterday that he had got it clear by boat, and it would soon be here. It must have come with you and caused all this. That's what the Nazis want."

At last the whole affair was plain. Fosbery remembered the small houseboat moored astern the *Fritzi Mendl* when he saw her first. That, obviously, had been the part of the bargeman, Plauen—to bring the gold in her from Katowitz. Thereafter Zaglul, having two commissions that ran parallel, with fine economy had handled both by making use of one enthusiastic Yankee news-hound with a streak of sentiment.

With admiration for the old man's acumen and nerve, mixed with chagrin, he asked: "He said that yesterday?"

The Pole assented.

"Then he's kidding you. His son Immanuel has stolen the stuff. He must be gambling that he'll get it back."

Slomniki's brows shot upward, and he pursed his lips, shaking his head. "I was afraid of something of the sort. Three million gold without protection is a thing to dazzle men. But why did Zaglul not tell me?"

Fosbery's reply was positive. "His pride! Zaglul delivers the goods. He plays straight, and he never talks. That is his reputation, and he treasures it. That's why this business of his son has griped him so. But I think your gold's all right. It's in the Horn, I happen to know. To find it in there shouldn't be hard."

"But," Yegor said, "finding the money won't help Anne. It's not ours."

Fosbery saw Slomniki gazing at his boots, and in Pryanski's eyes a certain look, and understood in what way they would see this thing.

They were devoted to a cause, and for it they would suffer everything. Nothing that could threaten them or theirs would be allowed to hinder it. All they could do in other ways for Anne they would do, but they would not give up this gold that was the lifeblood of the thing they served. Nor, was his thought, would Anne expect it or approve of it. She was of that same stuff.

At once in Fosbery's mind was pictured every horror he had heard of Nazi concentration-camps, and he discovered that he was not so inhibited. At any cost, he'd save her that!

And he felt free to act. He had been given no confidence and was obligated to none of them. They had all dealt with Zaglul. Let them do so now. If this gold was the price of Anne's protection, if he could get it, he would give it for her and to hell with them! And what was more, for once, through Nick, he held the trumps.

His Irish blood was suddenly up. He said with heat: "Well, someone's got to help her. I'll get after it."

Down in the restaurant, he found his place was taken by the girl who'd been with Lutwein when he met him earlier. She was a delicate and lovely thing, the white-skinned type with curling fine dark hair peculiar to Rumania. The meal that Anne had planned had reached the stage of pheasant and Burgundy.

Lutwein introduced them: "Mr. Fosbery—Miss Vanescu. You must excuse us, Fosbery. You were so long, and food like this should not be spoiled. Waiter, another chair."

"No need," he answered curtly. "I'm looking into what you want. Where can I reach you later?"

With a quick gleam of satisfaction, Lutwein told him.

CHAPTER TEN



HE situation facing Fosbery had at last become a definite one. There were two ways of helping Anne: one by locating her, the other by the finding of the *Fritzi Mendl*; and of the two, the latter seemed by far the easier. Where Anne might be he had no idea, but the yawl he knew was in the Horn. After so short a time, the money might be still on board.

The storied offshoot of the Bosphorus called the Golden Horn is leaf-shaped and some four miles long by two miles wide. Its stalk is crossed by bridges from Stamboul to Galata; and about this end the docks for ocean-going vessels lie. Inside, where the Horn widens out, the seaport dwindles, and beyond the Horn's greatest width is the resort of little ships. The wharf that serves the fish-market is almost last: after it come the yards of caïque shipwrights who have built there for five hundred years—piles of their timber, ancient jetties, native houseboats, running out to small-craft graveyards, and at length to wooded shores.

The *Fritzi Mendl*, having entered with the fleet, was known to be inside beyond the fishing wharf, and given the time and purpose, every place where she could hide could be explored.

Outside such a chance as had in fact given her away, the taking of her in had been a masterstroke. It was the last place that the searchers would be thinking of, and from it the dispersal of her cargo could be carried out in secrecy. But once it was known that she was there, she could be easily identified. Most of the sailboats in the Horn were lateen-rigged. Yawls were conspicuous. . . .

The following sunrise, breaking through the haze, found Fosbery and Carabis in a dinghy with an outboard motor chugging out from the fishing wharf to waters still and silken in the morning light. By eight o'clock they had established that the yawl was not moored in the open, and had begun a circuit of the inner shores, searching with glasses every nook in which a boat might hide; and every fore-and-aft rigged craft whose stern they could not see, they checked.

Fosbery did not observe a handsome launch that had lain waiting for them in among the fishing fleet, had followed them discreetly, and now lay grappled to an anchored craft while men aboard watched them through binoculars. He might have been more wary had he not felt sure that Lutwein could not know of his relationship with Nick. Theirs was an unusual contact, and each time they'd met, he'd been quite certain Lutwein could not be informed.

They had searched the north shore, passed the Horn's inmost point, where are the lovely little Mosque of Ezob and the stream poetically called "Sweet Waters of Europe," and were part-way back along the wooded shore. Buildings were recommending when they reached the entrance to a narrow creek between steep banks. High upon weed-hung piles, with sagging planking and dilapidated sheds, a little up this creek stood an abandoned wharf. It seemed to be unoccupied, and Fosbery was passing on when Carabis grabbed his arm and pointed. At the wharf's inner end, and thus concealed except from vision underneath, there was a floating stage. Between the piles, at this, was seen the outline of a likely craft.

They circled back and chugged in up the creek, and when they cleared the stage they saw she was a stout yawl, painted blue. Seated upon her hatch was a squat, bullet-headed man. Warned by their engine's sputter, he was waiting tensely for them to appear.

Fosbery moved first and had his pistol out, and Plauen did not hesitate. He turned, leaped onto the dock and bolted off into the brush.

Their near approach produced no other sign of life; so they climbed aboard and found no one else there. Spreading his hands, Nick said: "No girl. Too bad."

"Look, Nick! I want to search this boat."

Fo'c'stle, cabin, after-cubby were drawn blank; then they knocked the wedges from the main hatch-cover, pulled up some planks and dropped below.

In the half-light the little hold seemed empty save for some jumbled gear, in which they rummaged until, throwing back a pile of sacks, he found what he was looking for, a stack of chunky boxes with rope handles, and the Polish eagle burned in each.

"There, Nick," he said. "D'you know what that is?" Nick hefted a box and dropped it with a grunt. "Heavy, eh! What's inside?"

"Gold, Nick. Three millions of it."

Nick stood pop-eyed, as Fosbery considered what to do. Now this was found, he must keep it safe while he arranged the trade with Lutwein. Perhaps he'd better—

The search had taken half an hour, and after they'd been out of sight some time, the watching launch had headed in. She was a smart white cruiser much too trim to have been built for pleasure, though she was gilded and upholstered so to appear. Her idling engines made no sound, and not until she bumped their side were Nick and Fosbery aware of her. Then they came scrambling up on deck—and Fosbery rose to find himself face to face with Yusuf ibn Zaglul and half a dozen husky Turks alert behind him.

He should have thought of this. Though Lutwein could not know that he was intimate with Nick, this was not true of Zaglul. That wily old Turk knew everything and never forgot. He had known about Fosbery's moonlight trips with Nick in the old war days, and a word that he'd been seen with Nick would be enough to make the old man cock his ears. Slomnicki would have told him that he'd left in anger, swearing that he would find the gold. That was enough, for Zaglul coppered every bet. . . .

There was a way with Yusuf that he recognized as the young man said: "I congratulate you, Mr. Fosbery. My father will be most grateful. We should not have thought of looking here."

For a moment he debated if he'd make a fight of it. But the demeanor of Yusuf's men showed that they had got their orders. One of them on the launch stood by an object covered by sacks that Fosbery felt certain was a pile of rifles.

So he controlled his impulse and told Yusuf savagely: "I've got a bone to pick with him."

Yusuf smiled, bowing; and it was confirmed to Fosbery that his foppish dress was no guide to his quality. He was his father's son, with all his subtlety and steel. "He will be ready," Yusuf said. His eyes lit up ironically, "Such affairs are his life."

His eyes went to the opened hold, and Fosbery said: "The stuff is there. Now what?"

Without surprise that he should know about the gold, Yusuf considered. "Frankly, we weren't prepared for this. It is possible that the Germans watched us."

"I don't think so. They're counting that the stuff will come to them."

Yusuf looked at him sharply. "I do not understand."

Fosbery explained; and the young man's face assumed a look that thrust the speaker off and set a gulf between them. It was his father's look: one moment Fosbery was at his ease and even feeling in a sense companionable; next they were worlds apart, by Yusuf's choice. That was the breed, aloof, impersonal, a breed of merchants, bankers and negotiators that had survived with wealth the coils of Turkish centuries.

The young Armenian climbed up on the wharf and, careful not to expose himself, examined the Horn with his binoculars. When he came back, he said: "I don't think we were followed. We'll go in."

WITH the launch leading, followed by the *Fritzi Mendl* with the dinghy towed, they slipped along close in till at the city's rim they reached an old-time residential waterfront.

Here was a passage through a grassy bank gracious with cypresses; inside, a basin and a boathouse built of logs moss-grown and marked by medieval ax-strokes. The boats ran in and tied up at a wharf all grown with fern. It came to Fosbery that the grounds of Zaglul's house backed on the Horn, and here in its ancient water-gate, he thought of all the traffic that had passed that way. What tales the hoary place could tell!

Yusuf said: "My father should be still at home. Will you come in?" He gave instructions for the guarding of the boat, and then conducted Fosbery through wide state-ly gardens to the house beyond.

Fosbery neared this interview with Zaglul with the intention that he'd make clear in the strongest terms his feeling at the way he'd been imposed upon. But the closer he approached it, the more he felt that this would be a waste of time. Zaglul had never said that he was carrying nothing on the boat. He'd simply put Anne's case to him and passed him on to her. What followed had been between these two; and a tirade because he'd not been given a confidence also denied to her, would only weaken the stand by which he planned to make sure of the old man's aid. Therefore the interview produced no reference to a matter that had loomed so large with him.

They met in the unlovely room where they had met two nights ago, and Fosbery was startled to observe a change in Zaglul. He who had seemed so ageless now looked older and a lot more frail; and Fosbery knew it was his son's defection that had caused the change. But his sympathy was tempered by the knowledge that this made more sure his own power to command his aid.

Whatever might have been Zaglul's inward state, his poise did not fail. "Good morning, Mr. Fosbery. This is good news. I am indeed indebted to you."

Concern for anybody's feelings was a thing that in Anne's interest Fosbery could not afford, so he said brutally: "They'd have said that you were slipping, wouldn't they? Getting too old. That and Immanuel would have wrecked your name."

It was Zaglul's first intimation that Fosbery knew Artz was his son, but it produced no show of feeling in him. He admitted: "It would have been most damaging."

"Well," Fosbery declared, "you're not clear of it yet."

Zaglul's eyes narrowed. "How do you mean?"

"You are responsible for Miss Pryanski."

"But she's safe."

"She was. Now Lutwein's got her, and he's holding her against the gold. The Nazis get it, or she goes to concentration-camp."

Zaglul betrayed no sign of what this news might mean to him, and sat quite still, looking before him with blank, distant eyes, till in an oddly rising tone he softly said: "Sol! So indeed!"

Fosbery drove in: "It's up to you. The police won't act against a Nazi representative without some evidence, and we have none. But she's not far away. Turn loose your thugs and get her free, or I'll spread the tale of how you've messed this up from here to Alexandria."

Zaglul's old mouth drew in, and he sat motionless.

By and by he fixed Fosbery with a searching look. "You're very concerned."

"I've first-hand news of what goes on in concentration-camps. I'd break you flat if it would keep her out of it."

Zaglul's head nodded like a nodding doll's. Then presently he said: "I have always known you as a chivalrous man. Do not distress yourself. The lady will not go."

He got up with surprising swiftness, went to the door and called: "Has Yusuf left?"

"No," a girl answered.

"Stop him, then."

He explained to Fosbery: "He was to go and tell the Poles that they could take delivery."

His meaning was not clear, and Fosbery said: "And now?"

"As you have said, I am responsible for what has happened to Miss Pryanski."

The most he'd hoped for was to clinch the old man's aid, but something in his manner made him say: "You don't mean you'll give up the gold?"

The old man's shoulders rose. "You may be right, and I am getting old. Age makes for sentiment. But if I have to choose between two failures, one of which I must pay for and the other to be paid for by a woman's youth, I have no choice."

"But the stuff's the Poles'!"

Zaglul slowly spread his long white hands. "The property of broken governments is loot, and any man's."

As Fosbery headed for the Greek's and breakfast, he admitted he'd misjudged the old intriguer. The one thing with which he never would have credited him was sentiment, but there appeared to be no doubt of his sincerity.

"Tell Lutwein I'll deliver the gold and make arrangements," he had said. "I need not say Slomniki should not know till afterward."

This was the devil's own dilemma: things unthinkable for Anne—or delivery of the Polish gold to the Germans. The United States was not yet in this fall of 1941 at war with Germany; but Fosbery felt it coming; and to let the

Nazis have this gold was therefore doubly repellent. Was there no other alternative?

It was upon a meal accompanied by such unsatisfactory thoughts that Emorphupolos, the portly landlord, shuffling up, broke in: "'Ere iss a telegram for you."

Reading, Fosbery's spirits alternated from delight to awe. What a break, just when he needed it! Just when it looked as if he was going to be made to pay for having spent his life the way he had, instead it paid a dividend. The cable was from Eddie Martin, assistant editor on the *Bugle*. Harmon, the chief with whom he'd had the difference that made him quit, was dead. Eddie was editor, and offered Fosbery the foreign desk.

His mood of discontent was changed to one of jubilation. He shoved down his food and hurried off to find Lutwein.

CHAPTER ELEVEN



THAT night, toward half-past eleven, the *Fritzi Mendl*, manned by Fosbery, Yusuf ibn Zaglul and Nick Carabis, left Zaglul's wharf and headed for a small cape at the Horn's widest part.

"Meet me with the stuff on board off Achmet Point at midnight," Lutwein had said. "All thirty boxes. When it's on board my boat, I'll tell you where she is."

"And suppose you welsh?" Fosbery had demanded.

"That's your risk. We want that money, and we'll take no chances that you'll try some stunt with international law on us. Be there, and when I'm sure you've no one following you, we'll handle it. And if you don't turn up or try to trick us, in twelve hours the girl will be on her way to Germany."

As they cleared the mouth of Zaglul's anchorage, the moon was full, the air still and the water veiled in thin gray mist lit palely by the silver light. In half an hour, off Achmet Point, Lutwein's seagoing power-boat joined them. Lutwein called, "Stop your engine!" And as the sound died out, Fosbery stopped his own. Ten yards apart, they lay for fifteen minutes silent save for the water's lapping and the occasional creaking of the gear. Then, satisfied that they were unaccompanied, Lutwein came alongside, and the little massive boxes passed from hand to hand between the boats. When he had counted thirty, Lutwein called: "All right. Now follow me."

Suiting his speed to theirs, he led across the Horn to a Galata anchorage where lay a shoal of miscellaneous smaller craft. A good way west of these was moored a single caique.

Lutwein's boat surged ahead and stopped alongside, and they saw a woman come on deck, and Lutwein help her down on board the launch, which circled, came up abreast of them and went astern. Lutwein leaned out and shouted: "She's on that boat. I'll see you in New York. So long."

He waved his hand; the launch shot ahead and faded swiftly in the mist.

When the *Fritzi Mendl* ground along the caique's side, with a leap and a scramble Fosbery got on board. "Annel!" he called. "Annel! Where are you, Anne?"

From beneath his feet there came a muffled answer and a knocking on the forepeak hatch. He opened it, and saw a white face, framed by lantern light, look up.

She gave him her hands, and he heaved her out, demanding: "Are you all right?"

"Perfectly, thank you. You are wonderful. Ugh! It's foul down there."

"Fishing boat, I expect."

He got her overside, and Yusuf and Nick helped her down. As Nick put up the helm and the yawl swung around, Anne shivered.

He said: "You're cold. Come down below. We'll make some tea."

The cabin light revealed her grimy and disheveled, but he found it did not mar her looks. Instead, it gave her a barbaric air. He pumped the primus.

"We'll soon have you warm."

She was before the mirror, trying to arrange her hair. "It seems my fate to be in debt to you. However did you find me? What boat was it that took that girl?"

"Lutwein's. He brought us here."

Her hands dropped as she quickly turned. "Lutwein? But that girl said—do you know anything about this gold she was convinced we had?"

"We had it. That is, Zaglul had it hidden on board. It's what caused everything. Lutwein thought you were handling it."

She said indignantly: "So that was it? Why didn't Zaglul tell us?" She broke off, looking puzzled. "She said that it was why they kidnapped me."

Feigning preoccupation with the stove-vent, he admitted: "Yes."

She looked incredulous. "Don't tell me Grandfather—"

"He doesn't know. It was Zaglul."

"Zaglul! The money wasn't his."

Fosbery did not reply, and she burst out: "Why didn't you stop him?"

"I should have done the same."

"You— Oh-h!"

"Could I let you go to a concentration-camp?"

"That's not the point. The money wasn't ours."

"It was flotsam, and our only counter in a rotten game that has no rules."

Her voice was low with anger. "Oh! I wouldn't have believed you would so cheapen me."

He stepped up close to her: "Don't be so highfalutin'. I kept seeing some pin-headed German with a length of garden hose, questioning you. And giving up that cash cost Zaglul his commission on three million, don't forget."

Her lips were quivering, and he abruptly took her in his arms and kissed her. She struggled, but he held her fast. "This is why I had to, and you know it."

Suddenly she was crying, and her arms were round him, and she kissed him back. . . .

It was not until the kettle, boiling over, interrupted them, that they were aware again of mundane things; and after he'd removed it, they returned to their newfound delight, remaining conscious only of each other till the *Fritz Mendl* bumped against Galata wharf, where he had ordered Nick to go.

They gave their thanks and said good night to Nick, who in the lamplight grinned and fixed them with a knowing eye. Then Fosbery led her through the wharves into an all-night café he had once known well. Holding her hand upon the red-checked cloth, he said, without originality: "Now I know what I've been looking for. I never thought it might be this."

Her eyes held her answer, and her hand closed on his.

He said: "Now we can all go home. I've got a fine job in New York. Foreign editor on the *Bugle*. Might be the editor, some day."

Her eyes, on his, took on a troubled look.

He asked: "What's wrong?"

For a little while she did not answer. Then she smiled ruefully. "I can't go home till after the war."

"Why not?"

"I've got to work."

"Sure. We all have. There's lots of war work in New York."

"Mine's here. They're forming an army of Free Poles in Palestine. I've got to help."

"You can help 'em in America."

"Charity balls, and knitting! Bundles for refugees. What they need's help from flesh and blood."

"Sure they do. You can get it for 'em better in New York. Sell the idea back home, the way you've sold me. You can raise a mission for 'em, all equipped."

"I wish I could. I saw Warsaw, and I want to get as far away as I can go. But if I did, I'd never have a happy day."

"Why not? You can do plenty for 'em. With your connections and a paper like the *Bugle*, think of the work we could do."

"Lots of people can do that. No one can fill the place that I can with the Poles, because of Grandfather. I'll have to see it through."

The passing of an hour found them no further on. To his last argument, she said: "It would be quitting if I go now; that's the truth of it." Her eyes met his. "Believe me, I do want to, but it wouldn't work."

"You won't be quitting. You'll be backing up your husband as a girl should do."

It was the first word there had been of marriage, and her face lit up. It gave her a new look that thrilled him deeply, but she said: "You're pressing me, but if I gave in, I should go down in your estimation." And then, disconsolately: "I was afraid of this. I suppose that's why I've fought you all along. . . . I have, you know."

He saw the weak spot he had found, and thrust into it ruthlessly: "Well, I must go. You've said you love me—"

That moved her, and for a moment he thought that she was going to yield. Instead, she ran! Her eyes went to the clock. "Look at the time! We've forgotten Grandfather. He must be worried to death."

Sure now that he had found her vulnerable spot, he was content and pressed no further. After some delay because of the late hour, he got a car, and as in its privacy they climbed the long steep hill, they had better things to do than arguing.

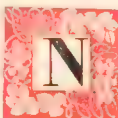
At the elevator in the Tokatlian, she said: "I'd better go up alone. He must be told about the money. He'll be furious."

"Then I should tell him."

"No, please. I'd better. I know what's best with him, really I do."

She was so insistent that this time he yielded, and the kiss that they exchanged was everything he could wish. Exultantly, he went back to the Greek's to bed.

CHAPTER TWELVE



EXT morning Fosbery awoke to a sensation of joy such as he had not known since adolescence, caused by the knowledge that his winds set fair. There'd be an awkward moment when he met the two old Poles, but that was really Zaglul's grief. And then he had Anne to persuade, but he was positive he could. She'd shown where she was weak. He'd challenge her through that, and in the end he'd break her down.

At breakfast in the sawdust-floored café he was thinking of the prospects, picturing all that he would like their life to be, when the entrance-clerk announced a caller in the lobby for him. He went out and found a smart Swiss chauffeur, hat in hand. The fellow told him: "M'sieur Zaglul asks a word with you. He is outside."

Zaglul's old-worldliness was not extended to his transportation, and the limousine that waited on the waterfront was English, long, black and immaculate. Zaglul sat hunched up in a corner of the buff upholstery.

"Ah! Mr. Fosbery. Our—small affair is not quite over, and I thought that you might like to see the end of it."

"How do you mean?"

"If you could spare the time? It won't take long."

Fosbery got in.

The car drove east across Galata bridge and pulled up at a building in the business quarter of the port, whose top floors looked across the Horn and up the Bosphorus. No ship, Fosbery observed, could pass and not be seen from there.

Zaglul got out. It was the first time Fosbery had seen him outside of four walls, and the conviction came that only something very special could have brought him out.

With his hands folded on his abdomen, the old man peered up at the building, reading the name-plates. "Ah," he said, "Here we are!" and led into an office marked: "THALER AND OSCARBOURG. SHIPPING BROKERS." Here a dark, square-set German with a heavy face regarded them dispassionately.

He had small, cold eyes behind pince-nez, which went from Fosbery to Zaglul in his gold-laced skull-cap and his fine white robes. Squatting in his office in the Covered Bazaar, the old man's presence had filled the room; here he appeared almost pathetically small and frail.

Thaler dismissed him as of no account and turned to the American. "What can I do for you?"

It was Zaglul who answered—humbly, with his hands outspread. "A small thing, Excellency. Just the receipt."

The German grunted: "What receipt?"

"For the gold."

"For what?" jerked out the German.

"For the gold you took from me last night."

The German stared. "What gold?" And patiently Zaglul recapitulated: "Last night you took from me the gold that I was carrying for the Polish Government—so called only, of course, Your Excellency—"

Thaler broke in: "I took it?"

"Your representative, Herr Lutwein, of the Economic Mission, that is. He said that the receipt—"

Thaler's pale eyes had sauced. "Lutwein took gold from you? How much?"

"Three million—or such, I am told, was the amount. It was in boxes, so we could not tell."

The German's jaw had dropped. Now it snapped shut. He took the telephone and called a number. . . . Then another.

Lutwein, it came to light, was neither at his office nor his house. It soon transpired that he had not been seen since late last night.

With affronted and incredulous face, the German demanded: "When was this, do you say?"

"Late last night, Your Excellency. In the Horn."

After the first jolt, Thaler got to business fast. "What gold is this? Where did you get it?"

Zaglul became all trepidation. "I was the agent merely, Excellency. Only the carrier—and of course all unknowingly. I would not touch such dangerous things. Some Polish refugees in Egypt dealt with my Bulgarian branch to bring a boat from Varna. They got it as far as here; then as my men were starting out for Alexandria, Herr Lutwein's launch stopped them and said that they had Polish gold on board. He searched the boat and took it in the Reich's name. We did not know that it was there, and he said you would give me a receipt to cover it."

"How did he know of it?"

Zaglul's frail shoulders and his eyebrows rose; his mouth curved down. "How should I know? Maybe the Gestapo—I hear that it is very able, that it functions here."

Thaler's blue jowls turned red. He snapped: "You're right. You'll find out when the Reich controls here, as it will soon."

"Yes indeed, Excellency. Germany's day has come, no doubt of that. But I am troubling you. If you will give me my receipt—"

"All Polish property is Germany's."

"Of course, Your Excellency. Naturally, the conquerors—"

"All right, then. Out!"

"But the receipt!" Zaglul cried desperately. "My reputation. They will say—"

"No! Out!"

Zaglul implored and almost wept, until the German called a man and hustled him out, the startled Fosbery following.

Once in the car and driving off, the old man's manner underwent a startling change. His lined face wreathed in smiles; he crouched in the corner of the car, rubbing his hands and chuckling.

Fosbery declared: "I don't get this. Who was that man?"

Zaglul said, "Gestapo head in Turkey," and he chuckled again. "Let me offer you a useful rule: A thinking German follows Hitler only in the hope of profit, and because he feels he has no choice. He knows the risk. Show him some safer way to feather his nest, and he'll desert."

"Lutwein worked on his own? He ran a bluff?"

"Planned it so from the start. After I had your news, I checked him carefully. I found his mistress—"

"Olga Vanescu?"

Zaglul nodded. "She had left her flat and moved her luggage to his boat. His things had gone there too. They were provisioning her heavily. The girl had disappeared, and I assumed she was with Miss Pryanski. It was she you saw taken off the boat last night. They are bound for safer waters—with three million in gold."

Fosbery said sourly, for the picture irked his consciousness of penury: "Well, he should worry, Gestapo or not. With that much money, there'll be plenty places he can go. I suppose that's what he meant by, 'See you in New York.' The gall of him!"

As they had talked, the car had crossed Galata bridge, turned east and hummed along the old Horn road.

It made a turn or two and stopped, and Fosbery saw they were at Zaglul's house. The old man said: "You have had some cause to be annoyed with me. It may be that I can make amends. Will you come in?"

Without much interest and perhaps because so early he had little else to do, Fosbery complied, and Zaglul led into the house, where he remarked: "I don't think you've seen my garden. Shall we wait out there?"

He led on through the low, cool house with its mosaic floors and cedar doors on to a terrace with a vine-hung pergola. "Autumn, the loveliest season," Zaglul said.

Still with that irritated feeling caused by the contrast between Lutwein and his sweetheart's monetary situation, and that of himself and Anne, Fosbery stood gazing at the lawns, the dark-green cypresses, the autumn roses and Greek sculptures backed by myrtle groves, their perfumes mingled with the salt smell of the Horn beyond.

Zaglul said, with a cock of his old head at him:

"Saladin built this house, as a present for a renegade Italian knight of his. We have had it for three hundred years—it was a part of the security which Solymán the Magnificent forfeited to our family after we'd financed his unsuccessful Georgian wars. . . . Ah, here's Slomnik!"

Out of the house had issued Yusuf, in his usual resplendent get-up, and the little bearded leader of Stamboul's Free Poles. The patriot's face was grim, and Fosbery knew he had been told.

Zaglul said: "Thank you for honoring me. Will you please come this way?"

Leading them through the quiet paths, Zaglul observed: "Though he had served me long, I had had doubts of my man Vaisili. I had heard his wife had dealings with a Nazi agent."

"Lutwein!" said Fosbery. "He said as much."

"Yes. Lutwein."

Slomnik put in: "What does it matter how the harm was done? That money meant food, warmth and hope to stranded Poles. Why have you brought me here?"

They had turned a hedge-lined walk on to the wharf, where lay the powerboat and the *Fritzi Mendl*, which apparently was starting on an overhaul, for she was disemboweled. Her chain-locker was opened and the cable hauled out on the dock; floorboards were out of fo'c'stle, main cabin and engine-hold, and men were passing out the mixed gear from the lazarette.

Zaglug replied: "Your countrymen will not go hungry, sir. Because of what I knew of Vaisili, I had my other people—" His mouth drew in, and Fosbery knew the wound dealt by his son burned still. "I had my other people take some steps."

Another of Zaglug's sons leaped off the yawl and spoke to his father: "We've found twenty-five so far. It was hidden well." Pulling back a tarpaulin, he exposed a heap of pigs of metal painted gray.

Zaglug turned to Slomnicki. "There is your gold."

In amazement, Fosbery said: "Then Lutwein—"

Zaglug's eyes took a vulpine glint. "Has iron to found his fortune on. For safety's sake, I had the others make the change in Katowitz and hide the gold."

Fosbery had heard that matching wits with Zaglug was unprofitable, and had a picture of the cocky Lutwein with his boats burned by the old man's call on Thaler, outlawed for life, a German Cain and penniless.

A man's face rust-smear'd thrust out of the poop locker, with a shout; five fingers were held up.

Zaglug instructed him: "Two here, three to the house." To Slomnicki he explained: "That is the lot. Thirty all told. Three go for my ten per cent."

Three hundred thousand profit, Fosbery noted.

As the old man and Slomnicki, who was now all gratitude, spoke of the handling of the bullion, picturing the delight the news would bring Yegor and Anne, John Fosbery said: "The others ought to know. I'll go up now."

Zaglug protested: "Stay just a moment. Then I'll be happy if you'll use my car."

He led back to the house, and on the terrace clapped his hands. To the Egyptian who appeared, he gave an order, and the man retired and came back with a brass tray carrying various articles. There was a silk prayer-rug in glowing hues, a tooled red-leather jewel-case, a filigree silver flask, an amber necklace, a jeweled riding-whip.

"Will you take these to Miss Pryanski as some trivial compensation for the inconvenience she has been caused?" The subtle eyes met his. "I think perhaps you will be sharing them—"

Fosbery smiled wryly. Once more, Zaglug knew!

Zaglug went on: "But should my instincts prove untrue, generously accept this for yourself, with my apologies." He offered him a massive cigarette-case of solid gold.

Fosbery received yet further understanding of the means by which the house of Zaglug thrived. He had brought the money from Rumania. To do so, he and Anne had nearly lost their lives while Zaglug had sat scheming in the Covered Bazaar. They got these gew-gaws, Zaglug three hundred thousand. Yet such was the old man's manner, that he felt the thought unworthy and himself ashamed of it. He could have kicked himself, and Zaglug too. Instead, he found himself expressing thanks.

FOSBERY and Slomnicki left together in the limousine. The little man was voluble of gratitude and of all the rescued gold meant to the cause he served.

Fosbery paid little heed, being absorbed upon his own affairs. His life had suddenly received direction, shape. He had a first-rate job, sufficient income and a New York future. The only woman he had wished to marry was in love with him, and he felt sure that in a show-down that would outweigh all else with her, and she would come with him. That show-down he would have right now.

Recalling the night he'd waited for her on the Bratych marsh, he thought how strange it was that this adventure, started upon so irresponsibly, should lead to what that night he'd realized he ought to have. It was an omen, clinching the philosophy by which he'd lived: "Don't lay set plans. Never play safe. Follow your star, wherever it may lead, and everything will come out right."

Against Slomnicki's talk of Polish armies taking shape in Palestine, his mind was picturing New York with Anne.

A nice apartment in the Village; first nights, and suppers at special restaurants; good talk with treasured friends; some serious writing maybe; reading and quiet evenings; home!

When they reached the hotel Slomnicki said: "There is no need to be announced. They are expecting me."

They went up, and found the Pryanski's corridor filled with needy, forlorn-looking men.

"Some of the men that I was speaking of," Slomnicki said. "They escape from Poland by all sorts of ways. We rest them here and send them off to Haifa where the Army grows. Pryanski is addressing these before they go. For Poles, his is a name to conjure with."

As they approached, a door was opened and the men began filing in. It was not one of the Pryanski's rooms, but a big chamber with the furniture pushed back. At one end, in an armchair, wearing a dressing-gown and wrapped in rugs, sat old Yegor, an aged eagle of a man with fiery eyes and tumbling snow-white hair. At the door, welcoming in the men, was Anne.

WHEN she saw Fosbery, her face lit up, and as he got to her, she turned from shaking hands with Poles to say: "Darling!"

The men inside had stopped, and the rest jammed the door. She said: "Be a dear and move them on in front, will you?"

He elbowed through and did so till the last was in. As the door closed, he made his way out to the wall beside Yegor, and Anne came round outside the crowd and stood with him. Their hands, hanging beside them, clung.

Yegor held up his hand. The sixty men grew still. Yegor began to speak.

His voice was weak at first, but as he warmed, it found new strength. He sat up straight. His stature seemed to grow. His eyes gleamed, and his tones took fire.

But it was not Yegor who with such force gripped Fosbery's interest. It was his audience. They were mostly young men, and all shabby, drawn and wan. One other thing they had in common; it was in their eyes, a look, a memory, a shadow that Fosbery recognized. He'd seen it in Anne's eyes whenever she recalled what she had seen in Warsaw.

The sight of these men suddenly recalled Fosbery's own bondage to the Turk, the ghastly march from Kut, the wire, the sun-baked compounds of untended sick, the dust, the whips, the loneliness. And he recalled the brotherhood it had evoked.

Pryanski spoke of Poland's soul, of its survival through the centuries, of Kosciuszko, Kossuth and their fights for freedom, and the certainty that what they'd kept alive could never die while Poles survived. And with his words, the young men's spirits rose like wind-fed flame. Their breasts heaved and their heads came up, and in their eyes there grew a light that seemed to fill the room. To Fosbery's mind, it seemed that there was something further there; for those with ears to hear, it was a sound that was the rush of freedom's wings, mighty and unsubduable.

When Yegor stopped, every wan face smiled, and every eye was bright. Then they rushed to crowd around him, shaking the hands of him and of Anne.

They did not know who Fosbery was, only the company he kept. Around him, too, they crowded, shaking his hands. Their eyes smiled into his. They hailed him: "*Niech zyje Polska!*"

He had heard that yelled in '20 in the streets of Warsaw, and knew what it meant. He grinned and gave it back to them: "*Up, Poland!*"

When the chance came, he slipped away and went downstairs and cabled Eddie Martin: "Sorry. Joining Polish army. Look out for series on Free Poles in Middle East. Use proceeds start drive raise us funds. Writing. Jack." Walking on air, he hurried back to break the news.

THE END

Readers' Forum*

(Continued from page 1)

BOOK with whom I usually discuss each issue seem of the same opinion.

I guess I wouldn't have minded the increase in war stories so much if they had not used up space formerly used for BLUE BOOK's fine brand of mystery novels. They are my favorite reading and the first stories I choose for reading each month.

Ed Schroer,
Cheviot, Ohio.

HAIL TO THE HIGHLIGHTS

In days gone by, I have watched for stories and features by H. Bedford-Jones, and Achmed Abdullah. They're the only writers of the day I could stomach continuously; and my feelings for BLUE BOOK, always sincere, have been upped a peg—again.

I especially and particularly like the idea of the excerpted reviews of books; that is the way to "review" a book. BLUE BOOK, in making highlight excerpts is doing a grand service—I know; I write scripts for comics magazines and have this year sold stories in script form, from seven books, using an adventure from each book reviewed.

I get exasperated at cross-word puzzles of the type you run; but since these are popular—so what? The rest of the magazine is unimpeachable. "Friar Tuck Tells All" brought amusement, and my seventy-five-year-old dad, a physician, laughed over it.

Montgomery Mulford,
Buffalo, New York.

LESS ABOUT MORE WRITERS

"Who's Who" is always of great interest, but I think you give entirely too much space to one author. I believe your readers would prefer a short squib about each one, rather than a full page devoted to a single person.

For example, I was delighted to meet Nelson Bond for the first time. His completely cockeyed imagination was a joy. Now, he pops up in this month's number, with an entirely different slant. What else has he done?

Sure—I know you have lots of well-known authors writing for the BLUE BOOK. But even they have things happen to them—fresh, new bits of information that would be of interest. Why not tell us about them?

But I must congratulate the editors on their superb job of story selection.

Helen Scott,
Santa Monica, Calif.

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Letters should not be longer than two hundred words, no letters can be returned, and all will become property of McCall Corporation. They should be addressed: Editor of Letters, Blue Book Magazine, 230 Park Ave., New York.

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"Mr. Honey And the Hun"

A specially gorgeous adventure in transmigration, wherein our hero meets Honoria, Princess of ancient Rome, and brings about the downfall of Attila the Hun.

by BERTRAM ATKEY



Men from the Sky

When an American ferry bomber made a forced landing off the Vichy African coast, a series of surprising events followed swiftly.... Mr. Surdez in fine form.

by GEORGES SURDEZ

Guadalcanal, Bearing S. E.

A weird tale of the embattled Pacific islands today, and of magic on the part of the natives that makes voodoo seem tame.

by MICHAEL GALLISTER

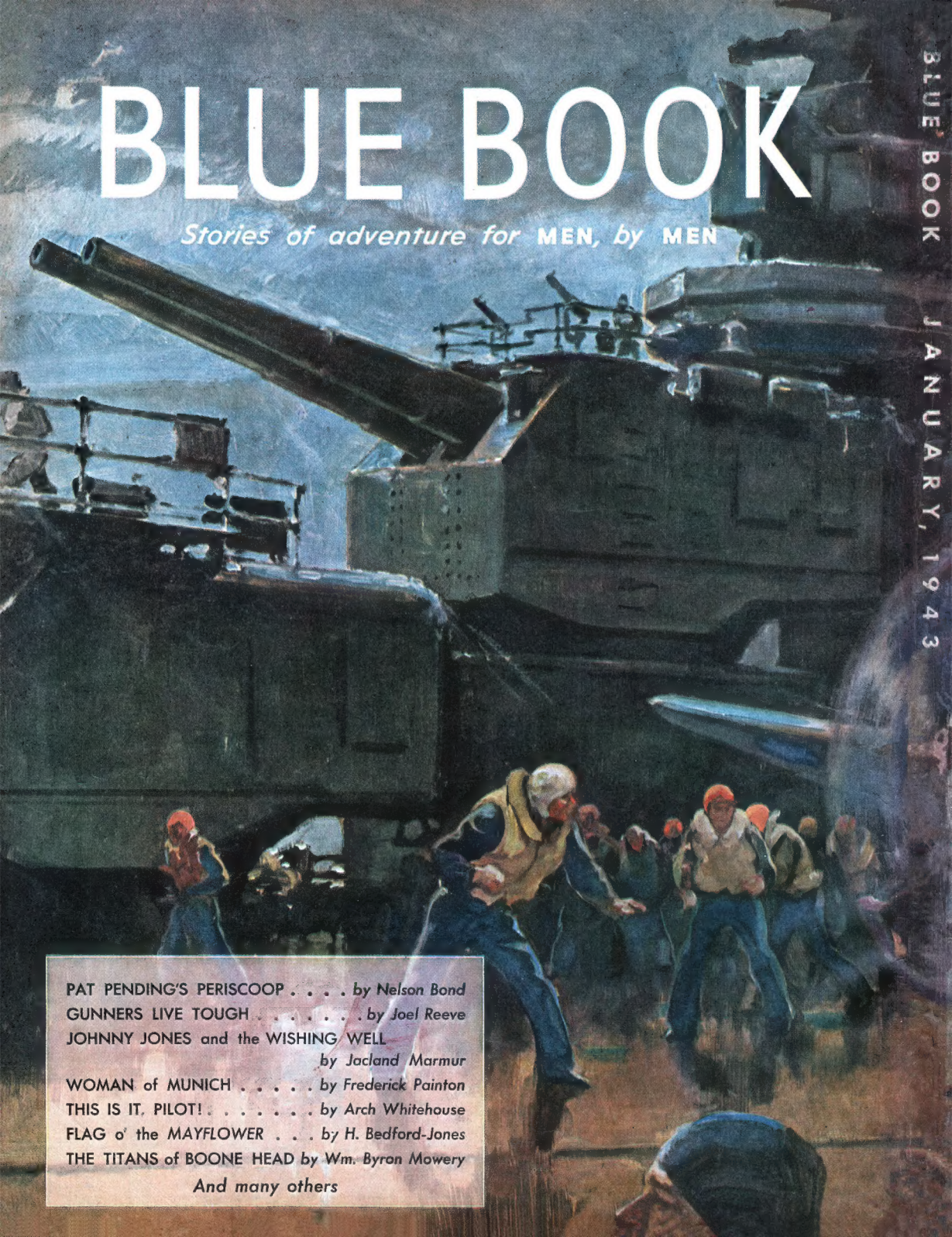
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